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AN AURORA.

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MAGGIE AND BESSIE.

AND

THE WAY TO DO GOOD.

BY

JOANNA H. MATHEWS

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"Little drops [illegible]
Make the [illegible] blessing land."

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MAGGIE AND BESSIE,

AND

THEIR WAY TO DO GOOD.

BIBLIOTHECA

BY

JOANNA H. MATHEWS,
AUTHOR OF "BESSIE AT THE SEA-SIDE."

"Little drops of water, little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land."

LONDON:
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I.

LITTLE FRIENDS AT HOME.

"MAMMA," said Maggie Bradford, as she sat upon the floor in her mother's room, lacing her walking boots,—"mamma, I wish I had another terrible fault."

"Why, Maggie?" said Mrs Bradford.

"I do, indeed, mamma,—a dreadful fault, something a great deal worse than carelessness."

Mrs Bradford was busy unpacking trunks and arranging drawers and closets; for the family had just come home from the sea-shore, where they had been spending the summer; but she was so surprised to hear Maggie say this, that she turned around with her hands full, to look at her little daughter. She saw that Maggie was very much in earnest, and had some reason for this strange wish.

"And why do you wish that, my child," she asked.

AN AURORA.

Front.

[illegible] AND BESSIE,

OR

[illegible] WAY TO BE GOOD.

[illegible] MATHEWS,
[illegible]

[illegible]

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boot-lace broken! I just believe that shoemaker sells bad laces on purpose to provoke little girls. Something ought to be done to him. It's such a bother to lace my boots, and 'most always just when I have one done, the lace breaks. It's too bad!"

"Yes, it is too bad, Maggie, quite too bad that you should destroy so many laces; but I scarcely think Mr White does his work poorly on purpose to vex his little customers. It is your own impatience and heedlessness, my daughter, which are to blame. You pull and drag at your shoe-strings, not taking time to fasten them properly, and of course they knot and break. That is the second one this week, and last week, also, you destroyed two. You say you wish to learn to dress yourself, that you may be a useful and helpful little girl; but you make more trouble than you save when you tear the buttons and strings from your clothes, or knot and fray your shoe-laces. It would have been much more convenient for me to put on your boots for you than it is to leave what I am doing to find a lace among all these trunks and boxes. Do you see, Maggie?"

"Yes, mamma," said Maggie, looking very

much mortified, "but do you not think my carelessness is any better?"

"Indeed, I do, pussy. I do not wish to take from my little girl any of the credit she deserves, and you need not look so distressed. You are much more careful than you were six months ago; you have tried hard, and improved very much; but you have still something to do in that way, dear. I think you will find the old faults quite troublesome enough without wishing for new ones to cure."

"Yes, mamma," said Maggie, "but then——"

"Well, dear, but then — what?"

"Why, mamma, I wouldn't feel as if it was quite right to wish to be paid twice over for curing myself of the same fault, and Grandpapa Duncan might think it was not fair."

"You are right, Maggie," said Mrs Bradford, "and I am glad to hear you say that; but I should like to understand why you and Bessie wish for a great deal of money. If it is for a good purpose I think I can put you in the way of earning some."

"Oh, would you, mamma? That would be so nice! Bessie,"—as her little sister came into the room, dressed for her walk, and followed by

Jane with Maggie's hat and cloak in her hand,—"Bessie, mamma thinks she can let us earn some money."

"Thank you, mamma," said Bessie; "that is *delighterful*. I am so glad."

"I will tell you what it is for, mamma," said Maggie.

"Not now, dear," said Mrs Bradford; "it is time for your walk, and you must let Jane put on your things. When you come home you shall tell me, and meanwhile, I will be thinking in what way I can help you. But remember, I only promise to do so if I think well of your plan. You may think it a very wise one, while I may think it very foolish."

"Oh, mamma," said Maggie, "I am quite sure you will think this is wise. Mrs Rush made it, and she is so very good that it must be quite right."

"Yes, I think any plan Mrs Rush proposes for you will be a safe one," said Mrs Bradford, with a smile.

"You mean you have trust in her, mamma?" said Bessie.

"Yes, dear. I can trust her. She is a true and faithful friend to me and to my little ones,"

answered Mrs Bradford, as she stooped and kissed first one and then the other of her little girls. 'And now, good-bye, my darlings. I will hear all when you come back. I hope you will have a pleasant walk."

"I shall not, mamma," said Maggie, with a solemn shake of her curly head. "I am so very anxious to tell you, and to hear what we can do, that I shall not enjoy my walk at all. I wish I could stay at home."

But Maggie found herself mistaken; for the day was so bright and pleasant, the park so cool, green, and shady, and so full of other little children, that she not only enjoyed her walk very much, but for the time quite forgot her plan and her wish to earn money. And in the park, our little girls met a friend whom they were very glad to see. They were running down one of the broad paths, when Bessie saw an old gentleman coming towards them, with a pleasant smile on his face. She stood still to take a second look, and then called to her sister.

"Oh, Maggie, here's our dear friend, Mr Hall!"

"Why, so it is!" said Maggie, in glad surprise, for this was a very unexpected pleasure.

Mr Hall lived but two or three doors from Mr Bradford; and as he generally came for a walk in the park after his breakfast, Maggie and Bessie were almost sure to meet him when they were out in the morning. But he was not apt to be there in the afternoon, and so they had not looked for him at this time.

It so happened that Mr Hall had stepped out just as Mrs Bradford's little flock started for their walk; and there he saw them all going down the street. He put on his hat, took his gold-headed cane, and walked out after them.

"Mr Hall, I am very pleased to see you," said Bessie.

"And so am I, Mr Hall," said Maggie.

"And I am very much pleased to see you," said Mr Hall; "but I should like to know what has become of two little granddaughters of mine, who went away to the sea-shore two months since? I thought I should find them in the park; but in their place I find two little strangers, who have no name for me but Mr Hall."

"Oh, I forgot, — Grandpapa Hall," said Maggie.

"Dear Grandpapa Hall," said Bessie, "please don't let your feelings be hurt, 'cause we only

forgot for one moment. You know it 's so long since we saw you."

"And did you forget me while you were away?" asked Mr Hall.

"Oh, no," said Bessie, "we thinked about you very often, and talked about you, too."

"Well, let us sit down and talk a little," said Mr Hall, as he seated himself on a bench, and made Maggie and Bessie take their places, one on each side of him. "And so you came back from Quam Beach yesterday?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Bessie; "yesterday, in the afternoon. How did you know it?"

"Oh, I saw the carriages drive up, and papa and mamma and a whole regiment of little folks pouring out of them. I came out this morning, expecting to find you in the park, but you were nowhere to be seen."

"No," said Bessie, "mamma was so busy nurse and Jane had to help her, so we could not take our walk."

"Ah, to be sure, I might have thought of that, and called for you myself."

"But we helped mamma, too, and she said we were of great use to her, so we could not have gone out," said Maggie.

"That was right," said Mr Hall. "Always be of use to dear mamma when you can."

"We can't do much," said Bessie; "we are too little."

"I do not know about that," answered Mr Hall. "These little hands and feet can help mamma a good deal, if they are only willing. If you can do nothing else, you can be quiet and patient when she is busy. If you do not make trouble, you save trouble."

"And we can 'muse baby," said Bessie.

"So you can. Halloa, little man! How do you do?" This was said to Franky, who had just come up with Jane.

Franky remembered Mr Hall quite well, and he also remembered how the old gentleman used to give him sugar-plums out of his pocket.

"Welly well," he answered. "Me want sudar-plum."

"Oh, you naughty boy!" said Maggie.

"Dear, dear," said Mr Hall. "I quite forgot the sugar-plums this afternoon. When I saw my little friends going up the street, I thought of nothing but the pleasure of joining them, and hurried out as quickly as I could."

"Dive Franky sudar-plums," said the child again.

"O Franky!" said Bessie, "don't be so yude. You make us very mortified. Please to 'scuse him, Mr Hall; he don't know any better, 'cause he's only three years old."

Mr Hall laughed, and offered Franky his stick to ride on, but the little boy would not take it; and when he found he could not have the sugar-plums, walked away with an offended air, which amused the old gentleman very much, though it distressed his sisters, who thought him very unpolite.

"And now tell me about Quam Beach," said Mr Hall. "You liked it very much, did you?"

"Yes, sir," said Bessie, "the sea is there."

"And you were fond of the sea?"

"Oh, yes, sir! it is beautiful, and it has waves, and they come up on the beach and bring the sea-weed and shells, and make such a pleasant sound. And we could see so far, far away out over the water; and we saw the ships and steamers, too. And there are yocks that we could sit on and play on; and we liked it so much. I wish there was a sea here, Grandpapa Hall. Did you ever go to the sea-shore?"

"Yes, often, and I have been to Quam Beach, and thought it quite as pleasant as you seem to have found it."

"We used to have plum-cakes," said Maggie.

"And go out in the boat," said Bessie.

"And in the waggon for straw rides, and to swing in the barn," said Maggie.

"And over to the hotel to see grandmamma, and Colonel and Mrs Yush," said Bessie.

"Who are Colonel and Mrs Rush?" asked Mr Hall.

"Old friends of papa and mamma, and new friends of me and Maggie," answered Bessie; "and we love them—oh, so much!"

"Colonel Rush is an English soldier," said Maggie, "and he was shot in a battle, so his foot had to be cut off, and he has been very ill, but he's better now."

"And they came to the city with us yesterday," said Bessie, "and went to the hotel; and Mrs Yush is going to have a class on Sunday, and we are to go to it."

"Are you going to leave your Sunday-school?" asked Mr Hall.

"I never went to Sunday-school," said Bessie. "Maggie did, but mamma thought I was too

little; but she said I might go to Mrs Yush, 'cause it was not too far. Mrs Yush can't go to Sunday-school, 'cause she must yide to church with the colonel, and she cannot come back for him in time. Maggie's teacher is going away, and she is to go to Mrs Yush too, and Lilly Norris and Gracie Howard."

"We are all to go to her on Sunday mornings," said Maggie; "and when she and the colonel go to church, they are to take Bessie, if it is too cold for her to walk; so now she can go to church 'most every Sunday. Last winter she went very seldom, because mamma thought the walk too long for her, and was afraid she would take cold. Don't you think it is a very nice 'rangement, Grandpapa Hall?"

"Very," said Mr Hall, smiling at Maggie's long word,—"a very nice arrangement; and I think Mrs Rush must be a very kind, good lady."

"She is," answered Maggie, "she's lovely."

"Grandpapa Duncan says she is as good as she is pretty, and as pretty as she is good," said Bessie.

"And the colonel is very good too," said Maggie, "and they are both very fond of us."

"That shows them to be sensible people," said Mr Hall. "I think I must make the acquaintance of this famous colonel and Mrs Rush. Will you introduce me to them?"

"Oh, yes, we will," answered Bessie, "and perhaps you'll see the colonel in the park some day. He says he shall come and walk here when he feels well enough. He's going to live over there in the hotel;" and Bessie pointed to the great white building that fronted the park.

"And how is Grandpapa Duncan?" asked Mr Hall.

"Very well, and Uncle John and Aunt Helen are well too, and Nellie is better, and has ever so many new teeth. Quam Beach did her a great deal of good. Papa and mamma are going to Riverside the day after to-morrow, and Maggie and I are going with them."

"I think I know some one beside Nellie to whom Quam Beach has done good," said Mr Hall. "There is some colour in these little cheeks which were so pale when you went away, and you are stronger and more able to run about; while, as for Maggie, she has become quite a roly-poly."

"Mr Hall," said Bessie, "do you know what we are going to bring from Riverside?"

"No, how should I, when no one has told me?"

"Our little dog that Donald, the gardener, gave us," said Bessie. "His name is Flossy, and he's old enough to leave his mother now; so we are to have him at home."

"Oh, I remember you told me about him in the spring. So his name is Flossy; is it?"

"Yes, sir, and he's Maggie's and mine. Do you think he will be lonely without his puppy brothers?"

"Not with two such nice little playmates as you and Maggie," said Mr Hall. "You must bring him out every day, and let him have a run in the park."

"Yes, sir, and papa is going to buy him a collar with his name on it and where he lives, so people will know he is ours if he yuns away."

"Very good," said Mr Hall, "and now suppose we walk around a little, or nurse will think I am keeping you quiet too long."

II.

MAGGIE'S PLAN.

MAGGIE thought of her "plan" again as soon as she reached home, and she and Bessie scampered away to their mamma's room to see if she were ready to attend to them. She was dressing for dinner, and so they knew they might go in and talk to her, for she said this was "Maggie's and Bessie's hour," and as she dressed, used to tell them stories, or teach them some pretty verses, or listen to them if they had anything to tell her.

"Mamma," said Maggie, "have you thought of any way that I can earn money?"

"You must tell me what it is wanted for, Maggie."

"We want to buy a library, mamma."

"What library, dear?"

"A mission library, mamma. You know my Sunday-school teacher, Miss Winslow, is going

to marry a missionary; but he is not a heathen missionary."

"I hope not," said Mrs Bradford smiling. "You mean, I suppose, that he is not going to India to teach the heathen, but is what is called a home missionary."

"Yes, mamma, that is it. Mrs Rush says that he is going far away, where the people have very few churches or Sunday-schools and scarcely any books, and they are very ignorant, and don't know much about God or how Jesus came to die for them, and I amafraid Miss Winslow won't be very comfortable out there, mamma, 'cause they don't have nice houses like ours, but just rough ones made of logs, which they call log cabins. You know Miss Winslow is a lady, and I am afraid she won't like to live in a place like that."

"Miss Winslow has thought of all that, my darling; but she is willing to put up with these hardships for the sake of carrying the glad message of salvation to those poor people."

"Yes, mamma, and Mrs Rush says that most of them are very glad to hear it, and so glad to have the books the missionaries bring, and Mr Long, the gentleman Miss Winslow is to mary

is going to try and have some Sunday-schools for the children who live in log cabins; and the other day, when Mrs Rush was talking to us about having a little class in her room on Sunday, she asked us if we would not like to buy a Sunday-school library to send to those poor little children, when Miss Winslow and her missionary go out there. You can buy a nice little library for ten dollars, mamma; just think, ten dollars!"

"Yes, I know, Maggie; but ten dollars is a great deal of money for two such little girls as you and Bessie to raise in less than four months. Miss Winslow is to leave soon after the first of January, and this is now the tenth of September."

"But Bessie and I are not to do it by ourselves, mamma. Gracie Howard and Lily Norris are to help; it is to come from the class, and Mrs Rush says if we cannot do it alone, she will help us; but she thinks the little log-cabin children will like it better if they hear it was all sent by other little children here, and we would like it better ourselves."

"And Gracie and Lily are going to try and earn money too?" asked Mrs Bradford.

"They have their share, mamma. Gracie's

grandmamma, who lives in England, always sends her some money on her birthday,—a—a—I forget what she calls it, but she says it is as much as five dollars."

"A pound?" said Mrs Bradford.

"Yes, mamma, that is it. Gracie says she will give half of the money her grandmamma sent the other day, and Lily has a hundred dollars in her father's bank, and he pays her money 'cause she has it there."

"That is called paying interest," said Mrs Bradford.

"And she has some of that saved up," said Maggie, "and she will have more before Christmas; so her share will be ready too; but Bessie and I have no money except our six cents a week, and that, you know, we promised to spend another way. And we don't want to be helped, mamma, but to try and earn the money by ourselves, if we only knew how. Do you not think it is a very nice plan, and that the log-cabin children will be very glad when they see the books?"

"I think it a very good plan, dear, and I will try to help you. You know, Maggie, we were saying this morning that you were still not quite

as careful as you might be. Now I do not much like to *pay* you for trying to break yourself of a bad habit, but as this is for a good purpose, I will tell you what I will do. Every month between now and January, I will put by a dollar for your gloves and boot-laces. This is much more than enough to keep you well supplied, if you take proper care of them, but if you keep on losing your gloves, breaking your boot-laces, and so forth, as you do now, you will have none left for any other purpose. And remember, I cannot let you do without such little things as you may need, for the sake of the library. I cannot have you going without gloves, or with such as are torn or out at the fingers, or with broken or knotted shoe-strings. I must still keep you neat, and shall buy for you whatever I may think necessary. But if you care enough, as I hope you do, for the little Western children to be thoughtful and saving, you may still keep as much of this money as will go a good way toward your share of the ten dollars."

"And am I to have money put by for me, too, mamma?" asked Bessie.

"Yes, dear, if you wish it, I will do the same for you."

Maggie did not look so pleased as her mother had thought she would.

"What is it, Maggie?" she asked. "Does not this please you? Are you not willing to try both to help those little children, and to cure your own fault at the same time?"

"Oh, yes, mamma, I am willing, and I think you are very kind. But Bessie will keep a great deal more money than I shall. You know you said the other day that I had three pairs of gloves where Bessie had one."

"Never mind, Maggie," said Bessie, "I think I'll lose a few gloves."

"No, no," said Mrs Bradford, laughing and shaking her head,—"no, no, that will not do. I cannot have one little sister trying to destroy or lose her things in order that she may be no better off than the other. And I am quite sure my Maggie would not be envious if Bessie saved more than she did."

"But I may say I will not give more money than Maggie does for the library; may I not, mamma? You know it is more hers than mine, 'cause she was Miss Winslow's scholar."

"You may do just as you please about that, dear. Each one may give as much or as little as

she likes, if it is fairly earned or saved. And I can put Maggie in the way of earning money by work if she wishes for it."

"How, mamma?" asked Maggie, eagerly.

"I have several dozens of towels to be hemmed, and I intended that Jane should do them all; but I will keep out one dozen for you, and will pay you five cents apiece. And they must be done, not at your regular sewing lesson, but at other times."

Now if there was one thing more than another which Maggie disliked, it was sewing. She always called the half-hour during which her mother taught her to sew "the worst time of the day." It was strange, too, for she had quick and skilful fingers, and sewed remarkably well for a little girl of seven, and people generally like to do that which they do well. But it was not so with Maggie, and her face grew very sober when her mother said she might hem her towels.

"But, mamma," she said.

"Well, dear?"

"Mamma, you know I cannot bear to sew. I do so *hate* it! And a dozen towels,—that means twelve, don't it?—why, I should never, never have them done."

"It shall be just as you choose, dear. I do not say you *must* do them, only that you may. But, Maggie, we can seldom do much good to others without taking some trouble or using some self-denial ourselves."

"I do not know what self-denial is, mamma."

"Self-denial is to give up something we would like to have, or perhaps to do something that is disagreeable or troublesome to ourselves, for the sake of another. This morning I gave you two plums,—one for yourself, one for Bessie. One was much larger than the other, and I saw that you gave it to Bessie, keeping the smaller one for yourself. That was self-denial."

"But, mamma," said Maggie, "that was not anything much. I could not do such a greedy thing as to give my own Bessie the little plum and eat the big one myself. I would be too ashamed."

"I am glad to say that neither of my little girls is greedy or selfish," said mamma. "Do you remember the day at Quam Beach when your head was hurt, and Tom Norris came up to read a new book to you?"

"Oh, yes, mamma, it was so kind of him; and he read most all the afternoon."

"When he was on his way to our house, Mr Howard met him and asked him to go with him to see the wreck, but although Tom had been wishing very much to go, he refused, because he thought you would like him to come and read to you. That was self-denial. Mr Long and Miss Winslow do not like to leave all their friends and their comfortable homes to go far away, but they are willing to do it, that they may teach those poor people who have no one to tell them of Jesus. That is self-denial. And if my Maggie were to take her time to hem towels for the sake of the little Western children who have no books, that would be self-denial. And there was one great self-denial, greater than any other the world can ever see. Do you know what that was, my darling?"

"When Abraham killed—I mean when he was going to kill Isaac," said Maggie.

"Well, there was some self-denial in that," said Mrs Bradford; "but that was not what I meant. It was Abraham's great faith in God which made him willing to obey His word and sacrifice his only son; but there was a greater than he, Maggie who offered a more wonderful sacrifice."

"Mamma," said Bessie, "do you mean when Jesus left His heaven, and came to die for us?"

"Yes, dear; and when we find it hard to give up our own wishes for the sake of others, let us remember all the dear Saviour has done for us, and that will make the task easier and pleasanter. And the Bible says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.' That means that, when we are working for Jesus' people, or for His little lambs, we are working for Him."

"And two little lambs can help some other little lambs," said Bessie, as if this thought pleased her very much.

"Mamma," said Maggie, drawing a long sigh, "I think I'll have a self-denial, and hem those towels. How much money will twelve towels make?"

"Twelve towels at five cents apiece will make sixty cents," said Mrs Bradford; "and perhaps, by and by, you will find some other way to gain money."

"May I earn money any way I can, mamma?" asked Maggie.

"I cannot promise that," said mamma, smiling. "You might wish to earn money in some

way I might not think proper, even for a good purpose."

"And what can I do, mamma?" asked Bessie. "I want to work too, and I don't know how to sew."

"What shall we find for those little hands to do, Maggie?" said mamma, catching the two tiny hands Bessie held up, and patting them softly against her own cheeks.

"Work for those little hands to do?" said papa, who just then came in, and heard the last words. "I should think they were at their proper work now—petting mamma. Papa would not mind coming in for a share too."

"And so he shall," said Bessie; "but petting you and mamma is nice play, not work; and these little hands want to be useful, papa."

"I think they do pretty well for five-year-old hands," said Mr Bradford, as he sat down and took Bessie on his knee. "They bring papa's slippers, and rock baby's cradle, and sometimes I see them trying to help mamma when she is busy. I think we may call them rather useful for hands of their size."

"But they want to make money, papa."

"Ho, ho! that is it, is it? Well, I do not

know that they can do much at that business, or that they could hold any great sum if they made it. Let us see what they can do in that way;" and putting his hand into his pocket, Mr Bradford pulled out a number of bright new pennies. "Put out both hands."

Bessie put her hands together, and held them out, while her father counted the pennies into them.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. There, I think, that is as much as they can hold at once," said Mr Bradford. "Is there another pair of little hands that would like to try if they can do as well?"

Maggie was standing at her father's knee, with a very eager face; for she knew her turn would come next.

"One, two, three," began Mr Bradford, and counted out fifteen pennies into Maggie's hands. "And now what is to be done with all that money?" he asked, looking from one to another of the bright faces. "It is not to be wasted, I suppose, since mamma seems to be in the secret."

"We want to buy a library," said Bessie.

"A library?" said Mr Bradford. "Well,

I'll promise to read every book in any library you may buy for the next ten years."

"But it is not a big library with stupid books in it, like yours, papa," said Maggie, "but a nice little one, with pretty Sunday-school books; and it is not for ourselves we want it."

Then papa was told about Mr Long and Miss Winslow, all of which he knew before, though he listened as though it was quite new to him, and of the plan for the library, which he thought a very good one, and of which he had as yet heard nothing.

"Mamma," said Maggie, "will you take care of our money for us? I know I shall lose some of mine if I keep it myself."

Mrs Bradford opened a drawer, and took from it a curious little box. It was made of blocks of red and black wood, and had no cover; but if a certain block were pressed, out flew a drawer which moved on a spring. This box had been Mrs Bradford's when she was a child, and Maggie and Bessie thought it a great curiosity.

"There," said mamma, "put the pennies in this; fifteen of Maggie's and twelve of Bessie's, make twenty-seven. Pretty well for a beginning. All the money you earn may go in this."

"And the glove money, too, mamma?" asked Maggie.

"No, not the glove money. I shall keep that, and at the end of each month will give you what remains to put in the box."

"And you will keep it, mamma?"

"Yes; there it is in the corner of this drawer. You may come and take it when you want to put anything in it."

"Papa," said Bessie at dessert that day, "will you please take the fretful off my peach. I can't eat it so."

Bessie could never bear to eat, or even touch, a peach, unless all the furze or down which grew upon it had been rubbed off, and the restless, uncomfortable feeling it gave her made her call it "the fretful."

Mr Bradford took a peach from his little girl's plate, and as he rubbed it smooth, said to his wife, "Margaret, my dear, peaches are very plenty and very fine, and, you know, I am very fond of peach preserves."

"Very well," said Mrs Bradford, "I will put up as many as you choose to send home."

Bessie heard, and a new thought came into her little head.

"Mamma," she said, a while after, when she could speak to her mother alone—"mamma, you told papa you would make a great many peach preserves for him."

"Yes, dear."

"And, mamma, you know he likes the inside of peach-stones in the preserves."

"The kernel, you mean."

"Yes, mamma, and last summer Harry kept all the peach-stones and cracked them for you, and you paid him for them. Could you let me do it this time?"

"My darling, you would crack those little fingers; it is too hard work for you."

Bessie looked very much disappointed, and her mother could not bear to see it, for she knew how anxious she was to earn money for the library.

"You may gather up the peach-stones, dear, and dry them, and Patrick shall crack them for you, and I will pay you five cents for every hundred."

"Oh! thank you, mamma, that is very nice, and I will put away every one I can find."

And from this day it was quite amusing to their papa and mamma to see how carefully

Maggie and Bessie guarded every peach-stone they could find; and to hear them constantly talking over plans to gain a few pennies to add to their store.

"Margaret," said Mr Bradford to his wife that evening, "would it not be better for you to lock up that money-box of the children?"

"I think not," said Mrs Bradford. "They will want it half a dozen times a day. You know how such little things are, and they will always be counting their money. I believe every one we have in the house is quite honest, and the box cannot well be opened by one who does not know the secret of the spring."

So the box was not locked up; but the time came when Mrs Bradford was very sorrow she had not taken her husband's advice.

III.

THE MISER.

"FRED," said Harry, as the little sisters came into the breakfast-room the next morning,—"Fred, what have you done with my new top?"

"I declare," said Fred, after thinking a moment, "I do not know."

"That's what a fellow gets for lending you his things," said Harry, crossly; "you never give them back, and never know where you leave them. I shan't let you have anything of mine in a hurry."

"I know where it is, Harry," said Maggie. "I'll bring it to you. I saw it last night."

And away ran Maggie, always ready and willing to oblige; but as she reached the door, she stood still with the knob in her hand, "Harry, if I go for it, will you give me a penny?"

"Well," said Harry, "no, I will not."

"If you don't choose to go for it, tell me where it is, and I will go myself," said Fred.

But Maggie went without another word, and came back with the top in her hand.

"There 's your penny," said Harry, throwing one on the table.

"That 's as mean a thing as ever I knew," said Fred, "to want to be paid for going upstairs for a fellow who has a sprained leg and can't go for himself. You know mamma said he must not go up and down much till his ancle was well."

"I'd have thought anybody would have done such a thing sooner than you, Maggie," said Harry, reproachfully.

Maggie stood with crimson cheeks and a shaking lip. "I shan't have the penny!" she said, angrily. But just then papa and mamma came in and the bell was rung for morning prayers, which prevented any further quarrelling.

But Maggie's troubles were not yet at an end for that morning. Breakfast was over, mamma gone to the nursery, papa to his library, and the children were alone in the breakfast-room.

"Midget," said Harry, "you know that pink fluted shell of yours?"

"Yes," answered Maggie.

"If you'll give it to me, I'll give you any two of mine you may choose."

"Oh, Harry, I can't! Aunt Annie gave me that shell, and I want to keep it for memory of her. Besides, it's my prettiest shell."

"Aunt Annie isn't dead," said Harry. "You don't keep a thing in memory of a person unless they're dead."

"She'll die one of these days," said Maggie; "every one has to die some time, and I'll keep it till then. But I meant I wanted it because she gave it to me, Harry, and I can't let you have it." But presently, having forgotten about the penny, and thinking of the library box, Maggie added, "I'll give it to you for ten cents, Harry."

"Indeed, I shall not give ten cents for it!" said Harry. "It's not worth it, and—why, Mag, you are growing as mean as—as mean as—" Harry stopped, for he saw Maggie's colour rising and the tears coming in her eyes, and he was not an unkind boy, who would willingly hurt or grieve his little sisters.

"She is a real miser," said Fred.

Poor Maggie! this was too much, and she burst into tears.

"Don't cry, Maggie," said Harry. "I did not mean to hurt you, but I do not know what to make of you."

"What's all this wonderful fuss about money, Bessie?" asked Fred.

"Ask me no *lies*, and I'll tell you no *questions*," said Bessie, holding up her head and looking at her brothers with a grave, reproving air. "You talk very unproperly to my Maggie."

At this, the boys shouted and laughed so loud and so long that Bessie felt as badly as her sister, and saying, "Let's go away, Maggie," they ran off.

When Mr Bradford came out of his room, he saw his little girls sitting at the head of the stairs looking very unhappy. Maggie had been crying; Bessie had her arm around her waist, as though she were trying to comfort her, but looked as if she wanted comfort herself.

"Why, what ails my singing birdies this morning?" asked papa. "In trouble so early in the day?"

"Papa," said Bessie in a grieved little voice, "we are having very *misable* times to-day."

"That is bad," said Mr Bradford, sitting down on the stairs beside them; "but tell papa what

it is, and see if he cannot help you into pleasanter times."

"People say things to us," said Bessie.

"And do you not wish people to speak to you?"

"Oh, yes, papa, if they say nice things; but first, nurse called our shells and sea-weed, 'truck.'"

"Very poor taste in nurse," said Mr Bradford; "but I would not fret about that. Is there anything more?"

"Yes, papa,"—Bessie hesitated,—"but I do not like to tell tales."

"But I want to know what the trouble is. I shall not think you are telling tales when I ask you."

"Harry called me 'mean,' and Fred said I was 'a miser,'" said Maggie, beginning to cry again. "And I wouldn't be such an ugly thing now!"

"What is a miser, Maggie?" asked papa.

"An ugly old man who makes believe he hasn't any money, when he has a whole lot in bags in a chest, and doesn't eat anything but crusts, with an ugly, thin cat who hunches up her back," said Maggie.

Maggie's idea of a miser was taken from a picture she had once seen.

"Then my rosebud does not look much like a miser," answered Mr Bradford, patting Maggie's round, smooth cheek."

"But he meant I was *like* a miser, and they laughed at Bessie," said Maggie.

"But I quarrelled and said a cross thing to them, papa," said Bessie, who was always ready to own when she had done wrong.

"What did you say?"

Bessie repeated what she had said to the boys, making the same mistake she had done before, and her father could not wonder that they had laughed. He asked a question or two more, and soon knew the whole story of the penny and the shell.

"And it is very hard to have people say such things when it is a good purpose, papa," said Maggie, wiping her eyes as she finished.

"So it is, Maggie; but it is what we must all look for, more or less in this world. When we are trying to do good, other people will sometimes misunderstand us, think that we are doing the wrong thing, or perhaps doing the right thing in the wrong way; and they may tell us so

or make unkind remarks about us. But if we feel that we are doing right, and know that we are about the dear Saviour's work, we should not mind that. Yes, and we must bear to be laughed at too, my Bessie. I do not think though that your brothers have meant to grieve you so much. Fred, I know, will sometimes tease, but Harry is not apt to be unkind or provoking."

"No, papa," said Maggie. "Harry is a very good, kind brother."

"So I think," said papa. "Do the boys know why you are so anxious to earn money?"

"No, papa. I did not tell them, 'cause I thought maybe they would laugh at me."

"They shall not laugh at you, I will answer for that. But, although they were not very polite or kind in their way of telling you so, you can scarcely wonder that your brothers were surprised at your wish to be paid for any little favour you might do them. You are generally so obliging and willing, so ready to run and to do for the pleasure of helping others, that I myself might have thought you selfish and disobliging, had I heard you asking for pay without knowing your reason. And I would not do so again, dearie. Whatever you may be able to save by

denying or taking any pains with yourselves, or may make by doing any little extra work for mamma or any one else, well and good; but I would not ask to be paid for such small things as you are in the habit of doing every day for those around you. You must not be too eager to gain money for *any* purpose."

"Not for a good one, papa?"

"No. Never do wrong that good may come of it."

"Do you think I was like a miser this morning, papa?"

"No. I do not think Fred quite understood the meaning of the word himself when he used it in that way. To be miserly, or like a miser, is to try to save and put by money only that we may look at it, and count it over, taking pleasure in the thought that we have it, not in using it for our good or pleasure, or that of others. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, papa. You mean if Bessie and I were to put all our money into that box of mamma's, and just count it and count it, and never take any out, or spend it for the library or anything else, we would be little misers even if we are not old men?"

"Papa," said Bessie, "yesterday morning at prayers, you yead about the lord who went away and gave his servants money to take care of, and how one of them put his money in a napkin, and dug a hole in the ground and hid it there; and when his lord came home, he was angry with him, and punished him. Was that man a miser?"

"Yes, dear, I think we may call him a miser; and I am glad my little girl remembers so well. We may be miserly with other things than money. If we do not use any of the gifts which God has given us as He intended we should do, for our own good and that of others, we are misers; and it is as wrong to do so as it would be to waste them, or throw them away. Suppose you were to say, 'These are very small hands and feet which God has given to me; they are not nearly as large as papa's or mamma's, or even as strong as my brothers; they cannot do much work, so they shall do none at all; I will not run up and down stairs, or go little errands; I will not rock the baby, or amuse Franky, or do any other thing which might save my mamma some trouble; I will not even play about, or go out to walk, but just sit still and do nothing all day long. Or, this is a very young mind of mine, it knows very

little, and cannot understand everything, so I shall not try to learn and add more knowledge to that which I have. I cannot do much for the praise and glory of God who made me and gave me every good thing I have, so I shall not try to please Him at all. I will take and keep all He gives me, but I will not use it or enjoy it, nor let others do so.' This would be like the poor foolish man who buried his talent, instead of making use of it for his lord. It would be like a miser."

"But, papa," said Maggie, "I don't think I *could* be a miser with my hands and feet. Why, I would think it was dreadful to sit still all day and do nothing. They will move sometimes even when I don't mean them to; and if I want them to keep still, they seem to forget and just move of themselves."

Mr Bradford smiled as he remembered how true Maggie's words were. It did indeed seem impossible for those restless little hands and feet to keep still; they must always be busy about something, and he knew that she could scarcely have a greater punishment than to be forced to sit quiet for ten or fifteen minutes at a time.

"Papa must take his hands and feet away

now," he said, "or they will be late at the office. The hands and the head, too, have a good deal to do to-day if they are to feel at liberty to go to Riverside to-morrow; so kiss me for good-bye."

Mr Bradford stopped in the breakfast-room, where the boys still were, and telling them of what their sisters were trying to do, and how earnest they were about it, said he hoped they would neither tease nor laugh at them, but would do all in their power to help them.

Harry and Fred were really sorry when they heard how distressed the little girls had been, and promised to do nothing more to trouble them.

"I cannot quite promise not to laugh at Bessie, papa," said Harry. "She says such droll things in such a droll way, or twists something about, and comes out with it with such a grand air for such a mite of a thing as she is, that a fellow can't help laughing."

"The greater the difficulty, the greater the kindness to your little sister, my son. I know it is hard, sometimes almost impossible, to help smiling, or even laughing outright, at some of Bessie's speeches; but you may avoid doing so in a loud, boisterous, mocking way. Put your-

selves in her place, boys, and think how you would like it."

"I'm sure I do not mind being laughed at, papa; at least not much," said Harry.

"No," said Fred, "that he don't; so he never is laughed at. The other fellows say it's no fun teasing him, he's so cool about it."

"But Bessie does mind it," said his father, "and so does Maggie; and we are not to judge that a thing is right and kind because it is not disagreeable to ourselves. You know your Aunt Annie is exceedingly afraid of a mouse."

"Indeed, she is," said Fred. "She'll squeal and jump on a chair, and turn as white as a sheet, if she only suspects there is one in the room."

"It is real honest fear, too," said Harry, "no make-believe about it. I am real sorry for her, too; it must make her so uncomfortable."

"Yes," said his father. "She was frightened by one when a child, and cannot overcome her fear of them. Now I am not in the least afraid of mice; indeed, if they were not so mischievous, I should enjoy seeing them play about the house; but would you not think me cruel and unfeeling if I were to allow a mouse to be in the room with

Annie, while I either amused myself with her fears or was quite careless of them? Would you think I was doing as I would be done by?"

"No, papa," said both the boys.

"Then you see the golden rule teaches us not only to avoid doing those things to others which are painful to ourselves, but also to put ourselves in their places, and to say, 'How should I wish to be done by if I felt as they do?' There I have given two little lessons this morning,—one to my girls, and one to my boys,—and shall have to read a third to myself on the meaning of the word punctual if I do not hurry away. Good-bye."

As soon as their father had left them, Maggie and Bessie ran away to mamma's room. Maggie, always eager for anything new, begged that she might have one of her towels to begin to hem it at once. But mamma said it was time for their walk, and they must go out first. They found not only Mr Hall but also their friend, Colonel Rush, in the park, and Bessie introduced them to each other, saying, gravely, "Mr Hall, please to know Colonel Yush. Colonel Yush, please to know Mr Hall."

The two gentlemen smiled, shook hands heartily, and certainly seemed well pleased to know each other. Perhaps it was partly because they were both so fond of the dear little girls who stood beside them.

When the children went home, mamma had a towel neatly folded and begun for Maggie. She sat down at once, sewing away in a great hurry, and saying to Bessie that she was going to finish it that day. Presently mamma, seeing that she was moving along the hem pretty fast, came and looked at her work.

"Oh, Maggie, Maggie!" she said, "this will not do, my dear child. Such long crooked stitches! Why, you can sew much better than this."

"Yes, mamma, but then I am in such a hurry to finish it."

"But you must not be in such a hurry, dear, that you cannot take time to do it neatly. Suppose, when the towel is done, I were to hand you three cents and say, 'I am in such a hurry, Maggie, I shall only give you three cents.' Would you think that quite fair?"

Maggie laughed. "No, indeed, mamma; but you would not do such a thing."

"I hope not; and when you come to think about it, I am sure you will see that it is not fair for you to do my work poorly if I am to pay you for it."

"Must it all come out, mamma?" asked Maggie, as her mother took the work from her hand.

"I am afraid so, dear. See there, those stitches would not hold at all. I think we will take half of one side of a towel for each day's task. That will finish them in time, and you will soon tire of the work if you try to hurry through it in this way."

"Mamma," said Bessie, as her mother handed back the towel to Maggie to make a fresh beginning, "could not I learn to sew?"

"Yes, I think you are old enough to begin, if you will be patient."

"Oh, yes, mamma, I will be patient to learn, if you will be patient to teach me."

There was not much doubt about that, so the dear kind mother found a little piece of work and fixed it for Bessie. But she had no thimble of her own, and for that day had to use an old one of Maggie's with a piece of paper wrapped

round her finger to make it stay in its place. Mamma promised to buy her one that very day, and after this, whenever Maggie hemmed her towels, Bessie would sit beside her learning to put in stitches that grew neater and neater every day.

IV.

FLOSSY.

"AUNT HELEN! Aunt Helen!" said Maggie, almost as soon as they reached Riverside the next day, "may we run down in the garden and find Donald?"

Donald was the old Scotch gardener who lived at Riverside. He had been there for a great many years, long before Maggie and Bessie were born, long enough, as Maggie said, "to learn to talk American," if he had chosen to do so. But Donald loved the dear old Scotch brogue which reminded him of his fatherland so far away, and was at no pains to drop it; and our little girls liked him none the less that they sometimes found it hard work to understand him. And they had good reason to like him, for he was glad to see them when they came to Riverside, and tried all he could to make their visits pleasant to them. They were

in a great hurry to find him this morning, and could scarcely rest till they had permission to do so.

"Well, well," said Grandpapa Duncan, "this is a nice thing. Have you grown so fond of Donald since you have been away that you have hardly time to speak to me before you run away to see him?"

"Oh, no, grandpapa," said Maggie, "we like Donald very much, but you know we like you a great deal more; but you see we are so anxious about the puppy."

"Oh, ho! then it is the puppy you like better than me? I do not see that that mends the matter."

"Now, grandpapa!" said Maggie.

"Couldn't you come with us, grandpapa?" asked Bessie, coaxingly.

"Yes, do," said Maggie. "It's such a nice, pleasant day. It will do you good."

"And it will do us good to have you," said Bessie.

Grandpapa was very much pleased, but though there was a smile on his lips and in his eye, he wrinkled up his brow and pretended to think it was very hard he should be asked to go out.

Perhaps he wanted to be coaxed a little more.

"I have no hat or cane here," he said, gruffly.

Away ran Maggie and Bessie into the hall, and presently came back, the one with grandpapa's hat, the other with his cane. Maggie climbed on his chair and put his hat on his head, pretty well down over his nose too, while Bessie placed the cane in his hand.

"Now you are all ready," said Maggie.

"But I have a bone in my knee; how am I to get up?" said grandpapa.

Maggie took hold of one hand and Bessie of the other, and after a great deal of pulling, with some pretended scolding and grumbling from grandpapa, he was upon his feet.

"A nice thing, to be sure," said the old gentleman, "for two little city damsels to come out here to my quiet country home, to pull me out of my comfortable easy-chair and trot me around after puppy dogs and other nonsense!" and he frowned harder than ever, shaking his cane fiercely at the laughing children, who knew very well that this was only fun, and that he was really glad to go with them. They thought it a

fine joke, and went skipping merrily along, one on each side of him. They had gone but a few steps from the house, when Bessie stood still, exclaiming,—

"Oh, how pretty, how pretty! Look, grandpapa! look, Maggie!"

It was indeed a pretty sight that she saw. Just in front of them stood two tall trees which grew straight upwards for some distance and then leaned a little towards each other, so that at the top their branches wove themselves together, making an arch. Over each tree ran a Virginia creeper, or grass vine, winding round and round the trunks, spreading over the branches, and when they could find nothing more to cling to, throwing out long sprays and tendrils, which waved gracefully about in the gentle breeze coming up from the river. Although it was only the middle of September, there had been several cool, frosty nights, and the leaves of the vine were already of a bright crimson. The trees were still quite green, and the contrast between their colour and the red of the vine was very beautiful.

"Oh, who did it, grandpapa?" said Bessie. "Who painted those leaves? Did Donald?"

"No, darling, no hand of man could paint that. This is the Lord's doing, and it is indeed marvellous in our eyes."

"Do you mean our Father in heaven did it, grandpapa?"

"Yes, dear, it was the great and loving Father, who has not only made His earth to bring forth food and drink for all His creatures, but has also made it so beautiful that it may please and delight our eyes."

"But," said Maggie, in great astonishment, "that vine used to be all green just like the tree. How did it come red?"

"I will tell you," said grandpapa. "Do you know what the sap is?"

"No, grandpapa."

Mr Duncan looked around him, and then, taking his knife from his pocket, cut a slip from a tall plant which grew near. He pressed it with his thumb and finger, and a small whitish drop oozed slowly out from the end which had been cut.

"See there," he said, "that is the sap or juice of the plant. It is in every tree or bush, and goes running through the trunk, branches, and leaves, much as the blood runs through the

veins in your body. All through the summer it keeps the branches moist and the leaves fresh and green; but it does not like the cold, and when the frost comes, it runs away from the leaves. Then they begin to turn, some red, some yellow, some brown. Our pretty creepers here are among the first to feel the cold; and they turn sooner than the trees over which they grow. As the weather becomes colder, the sap goes farther and farther away, back through the branches and down through the trunk till it reaches the roots, where it lies snug and close in its winter home under the warm earth. Then the leaves shrivel up and lose their bright colours and fall to the ground. If you break a branch from a tree in winter, it will snap more easily than it will in the summer, because it is dry and brittle from the loss of its sap. All through the cold weather the sap keeps hidden quietly away in the roots; but in the spring, when the air grows mild and pleasant, it begins to stir and move upward again. Up, up it goes through the trunk and branches, till, as the weather grows warmer and warmer, the little buds which hold the young leaves and blossoms begin to show themselves, and at last unfold. Then the

small tender leaves peep out and gather strength and life from the soft air and bright sunshine and gentle rain, till the trees and bushes are covered with their beautiful green dress, and make a pleasant shade for my Maggie and Bessie when they come out to see their old grandpapa at Riverside."

"And give us pretty flowers to smell and look at, and nice fruit to eat," said Bessie.

"Yes, and see how our Father thinks of us and cares for our comfort at every season. If we had not this pleasant shade in the summer, with the soft green for our eyes to rest upon, we could scarcely bear the heat and light of the sun. But in the winter we need all the heat and light we can have; and then the leaves drop away and let the rays of the sun fall upon the earth to warm and cheer us."

While grandpapa was talking, they had been walking on; and now, as they turned a corner, they saw Donald. He was tying up some dahlias. The little girls ran forward.

"How do you do, Donald?" said Bessie.

"How is the puppy, Donald?" asked Maggie.

"And how 's yersel'," said Donald. "Eh, but I'm blithe to see ye aince mair."

"We're well," said Bessie, "and I can yun about now, and my feet don't get so tired as they used to."

"That's gude news," said Donald; "an' noo ye'll be wantin' the wee doggie hame wi' ye. Weel, he's big eneuch; and I think ye may tak' him if yer mither's willin'."

The children understood enough of what Donald was saying to know that he meant they could take the puppy home if their mother would not object; and Maggie hastened to say, "Oh, yes! mamma will let us have him; she quite expects us to take him home, Donald. Could you let us see him now?"

Donald was quite ready, and they all went over to his cottage, where the first thing they saw was Flossy himself, playing on the grass with his two puppy brothers. They all came running up to Donald, as if they were glad to see him, and then went snuffing and smelling about the feet of the children, as if they wanted to find out who these little strangers could be.

In five minutes they were all the best of friends, and Maggie and Bessie were seated upon the grass with the three little dogs jumping, capering, and tumbling about them and over

them. Such a frolic as they had, and how the children laughed, and how the puppies barked and yelped and frisked about, while it was hard to say who enjoyed it most, the little girls and the dogs, or grandpapa, Donald, and Alice, who watched them from the cottage steps.

The puppies were all pretty, but Flossy was certainly the prettiest of the three. He was beautifully marked in brown and white, and his coat was already becoming long, silken, and glossy. He was also the most playful and mischievous; and grandpapa told Maggie and Bessie he thought they would have their hands full to keep him out of harm. Once, in the midst of their play, Maggie's hat fell off, and in an instant Flossy had pounced upon it, and, when Maggie tried to take it from him, ran away, dragging it after him. Round and round the house he tore, and they had quite a race to get it from him. At last Donald caught him and took the hat from him; but, alas! it was none the better for its rough journey over the gravel walks. He was next at his own finery. Alice, Donald's wife, had tied about his neck the red ribbon which she kept to dress him with when his little mistresses came to Riverside, but his

brothers seemed to think he had no right to be finer than they were, and were all the time pulling and snapping at the ribbon, till at last it came untied. But Flossy had no idea of letting another puppy have that which belonged to himself, and pretty quickly snatched it from them. Off he went again before the children could stop him, and running down in the cellar and behind some barrels, soon had the ribbon torn to bits. Alice was quite vexed when at last she pulled him from his hiding-place, and found the ribbon entirely destroyed; but the children thought him very smart, and did not see why he should not have his fun.

"Eh, but you're an ill beastie!" said Alice, giving Flossy a cuff on the ear.

Bessie's little tender heart was quite grieved.

"Alice," she said, "I was 'fraid maybe you'd be sorry when we took Flossy away; but I think you don't care much; do you?"

"Na, na!" said Alice. "I canna be fashed wi' the three o' them, an' this ane's the warst o' them a'. He's aye in mischief. Didna he lick a' the cream for my mon's breakfast?"

Scarce a word did the children understand, except that Flossy had drank the cream meant

for Donald's breakfast, and that Alice was rather pleased to be rid of him.

"Perhaps he don't know any better," said Bessie. "He 'll have to be teached."

"'Deed does he," said Alice, as if she were glad she was no longer to have the teaching of him.

"Grandpapa," said Maggie, "may we take Flossy up to the house now, so that he may be used to us before we go home?"

Grandpapa said they might, and Maggie told Bessie that she should carry him.

"I 'll only carry him half the way," said Bessie, "and you can carry him the yest."

But Flossy had no mind to be carried at all. He liked to frisk about on his own four feet, and was quite ready to run after his little mistresses. Indeed, the puppies were all so well pleased with their new playmates that the other two wished to go also, and Donald had to shut them up to prevent them from following.

Grandpapa said they would not go directly home, but through the orchard, and so down to the river bank. In the orchard the men were picking the early apples and packing them in barrels, and grandpapa, going to one of them,

chose two large rosy-cheeked apples, and gave one to Maggie and one to Bessie. They stood a while watching the men, and then turned to go on.

Between the orchard and the river lay a broad green field, and in this field several cows and a large flock of sheep were feeding. Now Bessie, although she was not a timid child about many things, was afraid of cattle; and as Mr Duncan opened the gate into the field, she drew back.

"Grandpa," she said, "bettern't we go the other way?"

"I think not," said grandpapa. "This way is the pleasantest, and I have something to show you down by the water."

"But if we should be bucked, what would our mamma say?" asked the little girl, still looking timidly at the cows.

"We shall not be bucked, dear," said grandpapa, smiling. "Does my Bessie think I would take her or Maggie where there was danger?"

"No, grandpapa, but ——" Bessie still hung back.

"You shall not go this way, dear, if you do not wish; but these are our cows, and I know them to be all peaceable and good-tempered.

But if we turn back and go through the garden again, I shall be too tired to take you down to the river."

"I think we 'll go this way," said Bessie; and so they went on. But as they passed the cows, grandpapa felt the little hand he held nestle itself very tightly in his own; and as he saw how her colour came and went, he was sorry he had not turned back. The cows did not notice them at all, not even when Flossy, who seemed to think it would be a very fine thing to bark at something so much larger than himself, ran up to one and began woof-woofing in a very absurd manner. The cow just lifted up her head and looked at him for a moment; then, as if she well knew that such a tiny thing could do her no harm, put it down, and began to eat again.

"Isn't it er-dic-u-lous, grandpapa," said Maggie, "to see Flossy barking at that great cow?"

"Rather ridiculous," answered grandpapa. "Look at those little lambs, Bessie."

Bessie quite forgot the cows when she saw the lambs playing by the side of their mothers. But when Flossy found the cattle cared nothing for him, he thought he would try to make a little fuss here, and away he ran after one of the

lambs. The sheep did not take it as quietly as the cows; the lamb was frightened, and the mother, who did not understand that this was Flossy's fun, and that he could not have hurt her child even if he had wished to, put it behind her, and lowering her head, stamped her foot at Flossy as if she were very angry. Mr Duncan called the puppy away, but he would not mind, and Maggie ran to take him up in her arms. The poor sheep saw her, and thought here was something else coming to hurt her baby, so she must fight a little herself. She ran at Maggie, and butting her head against the little girl, threw her over upon the grass. The other sheep had stood looking on; but now, as if afraid of being punished for what one of their number had done, the whole flock turned and scampered away to the opposite side of the field.

Maggie sat up upon the grass. She was not at all hurt, but rather frightened and very much astonished.

"Are you hurt, little woman?" asked grandpapa, as he lifted her up and placed her upon her feet.

"No, grandpapa; but—who did it?"

"Who did it? Why, the mother sheep there."

"She is very ungrateful," said Maggie, indignantly. "I came to help her, and she oughtn't to do it."

"She did not know that, dear," said grandpapa. "She thought you, too, were coming to hurt her lamb, and she could not tell what else to do. See there, Bessie, the cows which you were so afraid of did not even look at us, while this meek, timid sheep, of which you had not the least fear, has knocked over Maggie. Do not look so distressed, dear; Maggie is not hurt at all."

It was some time before Bessie could quite believe this. It seemed to her scarcely possible that her dear Maggie should have been thrown down in such a rude fashion, and yet not be hurt. But so it was; not a scratch nor a bruise was to be found. The ground was not very hard just here, and the grass quite soft and long; and beyond the fright and a streak or two of earth on her white dress, Maggie had received no harm from her fall. It made her feel rather sober, however, and she walked quietly along by grandpapa's side without skipping and jumping as she had done before.

"Grandpapa," said Bessie, "don't you think the sheep ought to know better?"

"Well, Bessie, I think we must not blame the poor creature. She did not know that Maggie was her friend, and Flossy had frightened her, and made her angry. If she had been alone, she would probably have run away; but she loved her child better than she did herself, and took the best way she knew to keep it from harm."

"You are very naughty, Flossy," said Bessie. "You did a deal of *misfit*. You frightened the poor little lambie, and made my Maggie be knocked down."

"Yes," said Maggie, "he 'll have to be taught 'to do to others.' Poor little fellow! He don't know much himself."

"Yes," said Mr Duncan, "like all young things, he has much to learn, and his teachers must have a good deal of patience."

"Grandpapa," said Bessie, "are not lambs pretty good baby animals?"

"I rather think they are, Bessie. Perhaps their mammas sometimes find them troublesome; but we seldom or never hear of a lamb getting

into mischief or naughty ways. So when a child is obedient and gentle, we say it is like a little lamb."

"Mamma taught us such a pretty hymn last week about a lamb," said Bessie.

"Can't you let me hear it?" said grandpapa.

So Bessie repeated these verses:—

"Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and gave thee feed,
By the stream, and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight—
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice.
Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

"Little lamb, I'll tell thee!
Little lamb, I'll tell thee!
He is callèd by thy name.
For He calls Himself a lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I, a child, and thou, a lamb,
We are callèd by His name.
Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!"*

She said them slowly and carefully, not missing one word, and grandpapa was much pleased.

* William Blake.

"That is indeed pretty, my darling," he said, "and grandpapa is much obliged to you. What a dear, good mamma you have, always teaching you something useful or pretty."

"Oh, yes!" said Bessie, "she is just the most precious mamma that ever lived."

Grandpapa looked down as if he thought the dear mamma's little daughter was rather precious too; but he did not say so.

"I never saw such a good helper as our mamma," said Maggie. "She always can tell us how to do things."

Then Maggie told how mamma was helping them to buy the library, and of all their little plans. Grandpapa listened, and seemed very much interested; and by the time the story was finished, they had reached the river.

Mr Duncan led them through a grove of locust trees, and just beyond was the pretty sight he had brought them to look at. This was a pond into which the water flowed by a narrow canal cut from the river. Upon it were floating two beautiful white swans. The children had never seen them before, for the pond had been made, and the swans brought there, since their last visit to Riverside. Over the canal was a pretty

rustic bridge, and below it a wire fence, which allowed the water to flow in, but through which the swans could not pass. On the other side of the pond was a little house, made, like the bridge, of boughs twisted together.

"Oh, grandpapa," said Maggie, "what beautiful birds! How did they come there? And that water, too! It did not use to be there."

"No," said Mr Duncan. "The pond was made this summer, while you were at Quam Beach. Those birds are swans."

"And is that their little house?" asked Bessie.

"Yes," said grandpapa; and then taking from his pocket a couple of biscuits which he had brought for the purpose, he gave one to each of the children, and told them they might feed the swans. The birds were not at all afraid of the little girls, and came swimming up to where they stood, arching their graceful necks as if they quite expected to receive something nice to eat. Indeed, they were so tame that when the biscuits were broken up, they took pieces from the children's hands as if they had known them all their lives. Maggie and Bessie were delighted, and Maggie thought she would like to stay by the

pond all day; but now Mr Duncan said it was time to go back to the house, so they bade good-bye to the swans.

By this time Flossy was tired, and was quite willing to let Maggie take him up in her arms and carry him. Before they reached home he was asleep, and Maggie laid him in a corner of the sofa in the hall, and covered him up with a shawl. After a while, Bessie seeing him, thought she was tired too, so she climbed on the sofa, took Flossy in her arms, nestled down on the cushions, and in five minutes she, too, was fast asleep. There Maggie, who had been down in the kitchen, begging the cook for some milk for the puppy, found her. She stood looking at her for a moment, then ran into the library where her father and Uncle John were sitting.

"Oh, papa," she said, seizing his hand, "come and see the prettiest thing you ever saw. Come, Uncle John, do come; but do not make any noise."

Papa and Uncle John followed the eager little girl, who led them to the sofa where Bessie and Flossy lay.

"Isn't she sweet?" whispered Maggie. "Isn't it just like a picture?"

It was indeed a pretty sight. The sleeping child in her white dress, with her curls falling over the red cushions, and the little dog clasped in her arms, his face cuddled up against her shoulder. But Mr Duncan and Mr Bradford thought that not the least pretty part of it was the affectionate little sister standing by, looking at Bessie with so much love in her eyes. Her father could not help stooping to kiss her. Just then Aunt Helen passed through the hall.

"Come here, Helen," said Mr Duncan.

"Isn't that a pretty picture, Aunt Helen?" said Maggie, as her aunt paused to look. "I am going to call mamma." "No, no," said Mrs Duncan, "do not call her. You have given me an idea, Maggie. Can you keep a secret?"

Maggie promised, and her father said he thought she might be trusted.

Now Aunt Helen could draw and paint very beautifully, and her "idea" was to make a little picture of Bessie as she lay sleeping, and to give it to her mother as a Christmas gift. She ran to her room, and bringing paper and pencils, began to sketch her little niece.

Mr Bradford looked over her shoulder.

"Could you not put the other one in?" he

AUNT HELEN SKETCHING.

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whispered, looking at Maggie, who still seemed as if she could not take her eyes from her sister. "We never separate them, you know, and it will be a double pleasure to Margaret."

So Mrs Duncan drew Maggie, too, though Maggie did not know this, for her aunt said she should not let her see the picture until it was quite finished.

"And mind," said Uncle John, "if you say a word about it, I shall look at you with both my eyes, and put your nose between your ears."

Maggie laughed, and promised to be very careful; and now, as Bessie began to stir, Aunt Helen ran away with the picture.

Flossy was taken home in the carriage that afternoon, and I must say he behaved very badly all the way. He was not used to riding, and he did not like it at all. On the first half of the road, he whined and fretted all the time; and when he became a little accustomed to the motion, he would not keep quiet; and either scrambled all about the carriage, or if Maggie or Bessie took him upon her lap, put his head out of the window and barked at every person he saw, so that his little mistresses were quite mortified.

"Mamma," said Bessie, "please don't think

he's the troublesomest little dog you ever saw. We will teach him to behave better. If you hadn't teached us, maybe we would have been as full of *misfit* as he is."

Mamma said she did not doubt that Flossy would learn better in time, and she would have patience with him.

V.

THE COLONEL'S STORY.

On Sunday morning Maggie and Bessie were made ready, and taken over to Mrs Rush's rooms at nine o'clock, as had been arranged. As Maggie had told Mr Hall, Mrs Rush could not leave the Colonel to go to the school at the church; but she was very anxious to do something for the lambs of the Good Shepherd, who had so lately brought her dear husband into the fold, and so she had begged that these little ones might come to her. Mrs Bradford was very glad to have her children go. Bessie had never been to a Sunday school, and her mother thought the walk too much for her on a cold day; but Mrs Rush's rooms were so near their own home that she could go there in almost any weather. As for Maggie, she was rather glad not to go back to the school at the church. Her teacher, Miss Winslow, was going away, as you know, and she

did not at all like the idea of having a new one.

"I should be so very homesick after Miss Winslow, mamma," she had said, "but now I shall not mind that so much; and then Bessie will be with me, so we will be very happy."

Truly it was a pleasant class. Four little girls, who dearly loved each other, and the sweet young lady who was to be their teacher. Then the room was so bright and sunny, and the Colonel, to please his wife and her little scholars—perhaps also to please himself—had taken a great deal of pains to have all nicely prepared for them. Four small cane-seated chairs stood side by side, and on each of them lay a Testament and a hymn-book; while on the table were a number of picture-cards and a neat case, containing a dozen books, which were to be their library.

"When these are all read," said the Colonel, "they shall have some more."

There was only one thing which seemed wrong; but that was rather serious. The dear teacher appeared as if she would scarcely be able to do her part that morning. Mrs Rush had taken a severe cold, and had a bad headache

and a sore throat. She looked quite ill, and when Mr Bradford, who had brought the little girls over, shook hands with her, he said; "I think you are in no fit state for teaching to-day. You had better let me take the children home, and make a beginning next Sunday."

"So I have told her," said Colonel Rush; "but she cannot bear to disappoint herself or them, and I have agreed to let her try, on condition that, if she find it too much for her, I am to take her place. I do not know what kind of a teacher I shall make, but, at least, I can tell them a story."

Mrs Rush said she thought she should do very well; so Mr Bradford went away, and in a few minutes Gracie Howard and Lily Norris came in, and they all took their seats. Colonel Rush went into the inner room, where he could not be seen, but where he could hear, if he chose; and his wife began.

First, she made a short prayer, asking our Father in heaven to bless them with His presence and His love, that He would give her strength and grace to teach these lambs aright, and, to them, hearts gentle and tender, and ready to learn the way of life, and that He would bring

them all at last to dwell with Him in His home beyond the sky. Then she read to them of Christ blessing little children, and, showing them a card on which a picture of this was painted, talked to them about it.

"Now we will sing," she said, "or rather you may; for I shall not be able to help you. We will take something you all know quite well, that there may be no difficulty about the tune. 'I want to be an angel.' Who will start it?"

Any one of the children, if she had been alone, could have started the tune, and sung it through without trouble; but with all the rest waiting, not one felt as if she could begin. They all sat looking at one another, each little girl afraid to trust her own voice.

"Why," said Mrs Rush, "are we to have no singing at all? Cannot one of you do it?"

Then came two or three notes from the other room. Bessie took them up at once, and the rest followed immediately. As soon as they were fairly started, the Colonel paused, and let them sing it through by themselves. Very nicely they did it too; their sweet young voices making pleasant music in the ears of their kind friends.

"I want you each to learn a new hymn and a Bible verse, during the week, to say to me next Sunday," said Mrs Rush. "We have had no regular lesson for to-day. Can you not each remember a hymn to repeat now?"

"I'll say, 'Saviour, like a shepherd lead us,'" said Gracie; and she repeated the hymn very correctly.

Lily said, "Little travellers, Zionward;" but as you probably know both of these pretty pieces, there is no need to write them here.

Bessie said the verses about the lamb which she had repeated to grandpapa Duncan at Riverside.

Maggie's turn came last. "I am going to say the very best hymn that ever was made," she said.

"How do you know it is the very best?" said Gracie. "Maybe it isn't so pretty as the one Bessie said. I like that very much."

"So do I; but then this one *is* the best, for my own mamma made it," answered Maggie, as if there could be no doubt, after this, that her hymn was the best that could be written.

Gracie opened her eyes wide, and listened with all her might. To have a mamma who

wrote hymns, must, she thought, be very fine, and she did not wonder that Maggie felt rather proud of it.

"Shall I say it?" asked Maggie of Mrs Rush.

"Certainly," said the lady; and Maggie began.

"Little one, what canst thou do,
For the Lord who loved thee so,
That He left His heavenly throne,
To our sinful world came down,
On the cross to faint and die,
That thy ransom'd soul might fly
Far beyond all sin and pain,
Where the Crucified doth reign?

"Little hands, what can ye do
For the Lord who loved me so?

"Little hands fit work may find,
If I have a willing mind;
And whate'er the service small,
If I only do it all
For the sake of God's dear Son,
He the simplest gift will own.
Little hands, so ye may prove
All my gratitude and love.

"Little lips, what can ye do
For the Lord who loved me so?

"Let no harsh or angry word
From these little lips be heard;
Let them never take in vain
God's most glorious, holy name;
Let sweet sounds of praise and joy
All your childish powers employ.

Little lips, so ye may prove
All my gratitude and love.

"Little feet, what can ye do
For the Lord who loved me so?

"Follow Him who day by day
Guides thee on the heavenward way.
Little feet, turn not aside,
Tread down shame, and fear, and pride,
Aught might tempt ye to go back
From the safe and narrow track.
Little feet, so ye may prove
All my gratitude and love.

"Little heart, what canst thou do
For the Lord who loved me so?

"Thou canst *love Him*, little heart,
Such thy blessed, happy part.
In His tender arms may rest,
Lying there content and blest.
This is all He asks of thee:
'Little heart, oh! lovest thou me?'
Little heart, so thou may'st prove
All my gratitude and love.

"Little one, this thou canst do
For the Lord who loved thee so.
Little hands and little feet
Still may render service meet;
Little lips and little heart
In such glorious work bear part.
Little one, thus thou may'st prove
All thy gratitude and love."

"Oh, how nice:" said Gracie; and Lily said the same thing.

"And mamma is going to make music for it," said Bessie, "so we can sing it."

"Then we will all learn it," said Mrs Rush. "We shall have a piano here next Sunday, and there need be no more trouble about our tunes. Now I will tell you a little story."

But when she began to talk again, she was so hoarse that she could scarcely speak, and the children saw that her throat was very painful.

"Don't try to tell us; you feel too ill," said Bessie. "We'll just sit still and be as quiet as mices."

Mrs Rush smiled at her, and tried once more to go on, but just then the sound of the colonel's crutches was heard, and the next moment he came into the room.

"I cannot let you go on, Marion," said he. "I will take your place. Can you put up with a story from me, little ones, while my wife rests? She is able to do no more for you to-day."

Put up with a story from him! That was a curious question from the colonel, who was such a famous story-teller. They were all quite ready to listen to anything he might tell them, though they felt very sorry for dear Mrs Rush, who, seeming rather glad to give her place to her

husband, went to the other side of the room and took the great arm-chair, while the colonel settled himself on the sofa.

Bessie looked at him very wistfully.

"Well, what is it, my pet?" he asked.

"Don't you think you'd be more comfor'ble if I was on the sofa by you?" she asked. "I am sure I would."

"Indeed, I should," he answered, holding out his hand with a smile, and in a moment she was in her favourite seat beside him.

He told the others to stand around him, and commenced his story.

"A little child sat upon a green sunny bank, singing to himself in a low, sweet voice. It was not easy to understand the words of the song; indeed, there did not seem to be much wisdom in them. It was as if he were only pouring out in music the joy of his own young, happy heart.

"It was a lovely place. The bank on which the child rested was covered with a soft green moss, while around him bloomed sweet flowers, blue violets peeping up from their nest of leaves, and filling the air with their delicious scent, pure lilies of the valley with their snowy bells, and the pale pink primroses. Overhead grew tall

trees, shading him from the rays of the sun which might else have beat too strongly on his tender head; and among their branches the soft winds whispered, and the birds sang joyfully. At the foot of the bank was a path bordered with lovely ferns and grasses and flowers, such as grew above; and beyond this again ran a little stream sparkling in the sunlight, and gurgling and rippling over and around the stones and pebbles which lay in its way. And all—the boy, the birds, the whispering leaves, the sweet flowers, the running brook—seemed joining in one hymn of praise to Him who made them and gave them life.

"On the other side of the brook, and in a line with the narrow path, ran a broad road, on which also grew flowers gayer and brighter than those whose home was on the bank or on the path; but when one came nearer, or tried to pluck them, they were found to be full of thorns, or turned to dust and ashes in the hand.

"Both road and path *seemed* to lead to the mountains, which lay in the distance; but it was not really so. There were many windings and turnings in both, so that one who travelled upon them could not see far before him. Sometimes

they would lead over a hill, sometimes around its foot, sometimes through a forest, sometimes through a bog or stream. Those who became puzzled upon the broad road would lose their way, and could seldom find either track again; for there was nothing to guide them, and they would go deeper and deeper into the dark woods or the treacherous bog, or perhaps fall into some deep pit, and so they were never seen again. But if one who travelled upon the narrow path was in doubt whether he were right or no, he had only to lift his eyes, and the true way would be pointed out to him; for all along were guide-posts, and upon them were golden letters which shone so brightly that he who ran might read; and they told him which turning he must take. By the side of the path there ran also a silver thread, and he who kept fast hold of this could seldom or never go astray; for if he was about to turn aside, fine points or thorns would rise up in the thread, and, pricking him, bid him take heed to his steps. But however the path might wind, in and out, now here, now there, it still led onward to the mountains whose tops were to be seen in a straight line with the child's

home; and he who followed it could not fail to come there.

"The child was still singing, when a stranger came up this path. He stood still and looked at the boy with a smile, as though the simple song pleased him.

"'What is thy name, little one?' he asked.

"'Benito,' answered the child.

"'Ah! thou art well named, for truly thou art a blessed child. What a lovely home thou hast!'

"'But this is not my home,' said Benito. 'My Father placed me here for a little while, but my home lies far away on the mountains yonder where He is. There is a beautiful city there, where my Elder Brother has gone to prepare a place for me. Stay,' and the child put his hand into his bosom and drew out a glass; 'look through this, and then thou wilt see the beautiful city; thou mayest even see my Father's house. This glass is called Faith, and my Brother bade me look through it when my feet were tired and my heart was faint.'

"The stranger took it from his hand, and looking through it, gave a glad cry of surprise; then took from his own breast a glass like the boy's, but not so fresh and bright.

"'I, too, have a glass,' he said; 'but it is not so clear as thine. It is my own fault, for it needs constant use to keep it pure and undimmed, and I have not brought it forth as often as I should have done. But now the beautiful sight which I have seen through thine has taught me what I lose by letting it lie hidden away. And when art thou to go to thy Father's house?'

"'Now,' said Benito, 'for the message has come for me, and I am to start to-day upon the very path on which thou standest.

"'But it will be a hard way for thee,' said the stranger, in a pitying voice. 'I am taller than thee, and can look farther ahead, and I see rocks and stones which will hurt those tender feet, and hills which will be difficult for thee to climb, and streams whose waves will be almost too much for thee. Wait till thou art a little stronger and more able to travel.'

"'I cannot wait,' said Benito; 'I have heard my Father's voice, and I must not stay.'

"'And hast thou food and drink for the journey?'

"'My Father has promised that I shall be fed with the bread of life, and drink from living waters.'

"'But that white robe of thine will become soiled with the dust and heat of the day.'

"'This white robe is called Innocence,' said the child. 'My Father clothed me in it when He left me here; and if it should become spotted by the way, He has said that it shall be washed white again before I go into His presence.'

"'Truly thou hast made good use of thy glass,' said the stranger; 'and thine own courage puts my fears for thee to shame. I, too, am bound for the mountains, for thy Father is my Father, thy home my home. Come, shall we journey there together? We may perhaps aid one another. I can help thee over the rough places; and thou mayest now and then let me take a look through thy glass till mine own is brighter with more frequent use.'

"'I will go with thee,' said Benito, who like the kind, gentle face of the stranger; and comir down from his mossy seat, he put his hand that of his new friend, who told him his na was Experience.

"'Men call me a hard teacher, my child,' said; 'I trust I may be gentle with thee. shall not be able to be always at thy side, f may have work to do which thou canst not s

and I may leave thee for a time; but I will always await thee, or follow on after thee.'

"Experience was a grave-looking man, and his face had a sad and weary look as though he longed for home and rest. But he had always a smile for the child when he turned towards him. His dress was of gray, and about his neck he wore a chain of golden beads. So they journeyed on together, the man and the boy; each with a hand upon the silver thread which ran by the wayside.

"'What is that chain about thy neck?' asked Benito.

"'It is the gift I carry to our Father,' said Experience, looking down with a smile at the chain.

"'I have no gift,' said the child; 'I did not know that I should need one. My Elder Brother told me he had paid the price which should give me entrance to the beautiful city.'

"'He has done so,' said the other, 'and though thou goest with empty hands, thou shalt have as loving a welcome as if thou hadst all the wealth of the universe to offer. But still, one would wish to have some gift to lay at our Father's feet. Perhaps thou mayest find some jewel on

the road. I had nothing when I started. These beads have been given to me, one by one, by those whom I have helped or taught by the way; for, little one, thou art not the first whose hand has been laid in mine; and I have strung them together as a fit offering for Him to whom we go.'

"'I have no bead to give,' said Benito, sadly.

"'No matter; that white robe of thine gives thee a claim upon my care which I could not set aside if I would. Cheer up, sweet child. If a jewel fell in thy way, and thou didst not stop to pick it up, that thou mightst carry it to our Father, then indeed there would be reason to fear His displeasure, but if thou findest none, He will ask none.'

"So Benito was comforted, and once more went on his way rejoicing. His sweet talk cheered the older pilgrim, and every now and then they would both break out into songs of praise and joy. Experience helped the little one over many rough places, for though the path was at first easy and pleasant, it soon grew hard and stony. Then they passed through a dark forest, where Benito could scarcely have kept his feet but for the help of his older and wiser friend,

who took him in his arms until they were again upon the open road. But even among the brambles and thickets of the forest, the way was plain, if they but looked up at the guide-posts; for the greater the darkness the brighter shone the letters."

VI.

THE STORY CONTINUED.

"THEY journeyed on till they came to a grotto, built upon the side of the path, and Experience said, 'It is now the seventh hour, and we may turn in here for food and drink.'

"So they went into the grotto, where were many other pilgrims, and were fed with the bread of life, and drank of living waters, so that they were strengthened for the rest of the journey. And this food they received from the hands of two soldiers,—an old man and a young one,—both of whom were in shining armour, with a white cross upon the shoulder, and upon the breast of each hung a string of jewels so bright that the eye could scarcely rest upon them.

"'Did they find those jewels by the way?' Benito asked of his friend.

"'Yes,' answered Experience. "The jewels ar

souls that have been saved by the food which our Father taught these soldiers to serve.'

"'And see,' said the child, 'there is another pilgrim with a shining star about his neck.'

"'He started upon his journey with much gold,' said Experience. 'And he made good use of it, building such grottos as this, where tired pilgrims might rest and be fed, and others where the sick and lame might be healed. And he did this, not for his own glory, but for love of Him whose children he rejoiced to help. So the gold has come back to him in the form of this star, which he may offer to his Master.'

"'And as the little one looked around among the pilgrims, he saw that most of them had some gift which they were taking to their Father; and his own heart grew sad again, for he had as yet found none, though he had looked carefully by the way.

"When the seventh hour had gone by, the pilgrims all went forth on their journey again. Some kept near Benito and Experience, others passed far ahead, and some few were left behind. But the two soldiers were always near; for as Experience walked slowly, so that he might help the little one whose hand lay in his, so the

younger soldier also held back, that he might lend his arm to aid the feeble steps of the older.

"They now came to a black bog where the guide-post pointed to a narrow bridge which led them safely over it. But from the midst of the bog came terrible cries. 'Come and help us, for we have lost our way; and if we are not set right we shall never reach our home.'

"Then the two soldiers said they must go and help the poor lost ones, and Experience said he would go with them.

"'For the path is pretty plain for some distance now,' he said to Benito, 'and I think thou couldst walk by thyself for a while. Only from time to time look at the guide-posts, and be sure to keep fast hold upon the silver thread.' Then he left him to go with the soldiers.

"So the boy went on by himself, watching carefully for the jewel he hoped to find. And as he looked, a poor lame bird hopped upon his path. The broad road was very near to the narrow one in this spot, and walking upon it were many children and older people. These children had long been calling to Benito, telling him to come where the ground was soft

and easy to walk upon, and where he might play all the day long if he chose. But Benito would not listen, for Experience had told him to close his ears; and besides, he had the command of his Elder Brother that he should set his feet on the narrow path.

"The bird was a poor, half-starved-looking thing, with a broken wing; for these cruel children had caught it, and after teasing and tormenting it for a long while, had stoned it. It had at last escaped them, and fluttering across the stream which divided the roads, fell at Benito's feet.

"The boy raised it gently, bound up the broken wing, and gathering some of the grass which grew by the wayside, made for the bird a soft nest. Then taking from his bosom a piece of bread, given to him by the old soldier lest he should be hungry, he fed it with some crumbs, brought it water from the stream, and left it there in comfort and safety.

"On he went, wishing for his friends, and still looking for the jewel. Suddenly he saw before him a beautiful butterfly, with wings of crimson, blue, and gold. It flew gaily about him, now lighting on his shoulder, now circling

round his head; but never coming where he might lay his hand upon it.

"'What a lovely thing!' he said to himself; 'if I may but catch it, I will take it to my Father.'

"The butterfly lighted upon a flower, and the child sprang after it. Away it flew to another, and he followed, still to miss it. On they went, from flower to flower, until it reached the stream, and flying across, lit upon a showy tulip, just upon the farther side. Benito hesitated and drew back, for the insect was now upon the forbidden road, and he feared to disobey. But there was the butterfly fluttering its lovely wings in the sunlight; the stream looked narrow here, he could reach the prize, and be back in an instant. He should be so glad to show it to his friends when they joined him again. As he thought thus, he loosened a little his grasp upon the silver thread, and instantly small prickles started up upon it, reminding him of his duty; but he looked again at the butterfly, and then, forgetting all else, let go his hold altogether, sprang across the stream, and once more reached forth his hand. Again the butterfly fluttered off a little farther, this time burying itself in the very heart of a lovely flower.

"'Ah, I have thee now,' said Benito, and, springing forward, his hand closed upon the blossom. But he instantly drew it back, crying aloud with pain, for sharp nettles ran themselves into his tender palm, and the butterfly suddenly changed into an ugly creeping thing. He heard around him mocking laughter, and loud, angry cries, and, terrified, he turned to go back. But he found himself in a bog where his feet sank deeper and deeper, and his white dress became soiled and spotted. When he looked towards the stream, its waters had become black and muddy, and a fog hung over it, so that he could not see the narrow path. He drew his glass from his bosom, but alas it was so clouded that he could not see through it, and then he cried aloud in his pain and grief. Suddenly there came a voice from beyond the mist, —

"'Step boldly into the stream, my child; these are the healing waters of Repentance and Confession, and thou shalt pass safely through them to the true way once more.'

"Benito hesitated no longer, but plunged bravely into the muddy stream. And behold, the mist lifted at once, the waters became clear, and he saw upon the opposite bank the older

soldier, who held out his hand to him. The child grasped it, and in another moment he stood safe, but weak and trembling, beside his friend; and as he looked down in fear and distress, lest his dress were not fit for such company, he saw it was white and pure again, cleansed by the waters through which he had passed.

"Then came Experience and bound up the little bleeding hands, and replacing one upon the silver thread, took the other in his own.

"'I wished to carry the beautiful insect to my Father, that he might know I thought of Him on the way,' sobbed the child.

"'That butterfly is called Temptation, beloved,' said the old soldier, 'and could not fail to lead thee astray if thou didst pursue her. She has many ways of deceiving those whom she would lead into sin; and seeing the strong wish of thy young heart to gain some gift which thou mightst carry to thy Father, she took that very means to draw thee aside from the path of duty.'

"The little one sighed, for his heart was sad, not as much for the pain he had suffered as for his bitter disappointment. After a little, he

thought of his glass, and drawing it forth, found it bright and undimmed as it had been when he started. Then he grew happy again, and was going on his way singing, when he saw a boy, smaller than himself, sitting by the wayside, weeping.

"Benito ran up to him. 'What aileth thee?' he asked.

"'Ah!' said the boy, 'my sister and I were going home, hand-in-hand, and we were so happy, for we loved one another dearly; but a shining angel came and carried her from my sight, and now I am alone.'

"Then Benito drew the other's head upon his breast, and kissed him and wept with him, and spoke tender words to him, so that the child was comforted. Then they went on together, but they had gone but a few steps when the shining angel came again, and taking Benito's new friend in his arms, carried him away also. He smiled sweetly on Benito as he passed out of sight, and our young pilgrim felt a great joy in his heart to think that he had given comfort to the little stranger.

"A short distance farther on, the travellers overtook an old woman, bending beneath the

weight of a heavy burden which she carried. She seemed very feeble, and Benito was grieved for her as he saw how she tottered, and how hard it was for her to bear up beneath her load. She was faint and hungry too, and at every step it appeared as if she must sink down.

"'Can I not help thee?' asked Benito.

"'Dear child!' said the old dame, 'how can those tiny hands help to bear a burden such as mine?'

"'I can try,' said Benito. 'Lay a part of it upon my shoulders. I will take all I can to lighten thine. And see, take this; it will strengthen thee for the rest of the journey;' and he handed her the piece of bread which the soldier had given for his own needs.

"The dame took it and ate, and strength came to her as the boy had said; and as he tried to bear upon his shoulders a part of her load, she, too, shed tears which fell upon his bosom as she leaned over him. But they were tears of gratitude and blessing, and did her good; so that after this she went on her way with more comfort.

"And now the day was drawing to its close, the sun was setting, and the end of their journey

was near; for the pilgrims could plainly see the river which lay between them and the mountains where their Father dwelt. But just on the nearer side of the river rose a high hill, and on it was a castle, where lived a cruel robber named Doubt, who often came down and dragged many pilgrims up to his castle just when they were in sight of their home. When the soldiers saw this, they said there was one more fight to make before they crossed the river, and again Experience went with them, leaving the child at the foot of the hill, and telling him that if he were frightened, or if the robber came to carry him away, he had only to gaze through his glass at the opposite side of the river, and all fear and danger would pass away.

"So the three went up the hill, and the child sat down to await their return. As he sat there, he looked at the river and was afraid, for he thought, 'How can such a little one as I pass through those deep waters? The waves will be too strong for me, and will carry me away.'

"Then he remembered what Experience had told him, and, looking through his glass, he saw that the waves were so shallow that they would scarcely wet his feet; and on the other side rose

his Father's house, so beautiful, so glorious, that he cried aloud with joy and with longing to pass the river and be there.

"But now he found he was not to sit still, for as the fight went on above, and the soldiers and Experience gained the victory, one after another of the prisoners came down the hill, wounded and bleeding, for they had risen to help those who came to set them free, and had been terribly hurt in the battle.

"Benito rose and did what he could for them, bringing water to their thirsty, fevered lips, staying the blood as well as he could, and gathering fresh grass and moss for pillows for their weary heads, and while he was so busy, he felt a touch upon his shoulder, and looking up, he saw the shining angel who had carried away the little boy with whom he had wept.

"'Come,' said the angel, 'I am thy Father's messenger, sent to carry thee over the river.'

"The little one stretched out his arms with cry of joy; but, even as he did so, the old thoug came to him, and he said, sadly, 'Ah, I ha found no jewel to offer to my Father!'

"The angel made no answer, but lifted up, softly kissing his forehead, and Benito

gently into his arms. The angel carried him swiftly over the river, and on the other side stood his Elder Brother, who received him from the messenger, and laid him in His bosom; and He said to Benito, 'My lamb, put thy hand into thy bosom and see what thou findest there.'

"The little one obeyed, and drew forth a string of pure white pearls, so fair, so lovely, that they seemed more beautiful than any of the shining iewels which his fellow-pilgrims had worn.

"'That is thy gift unto thy Father,' said his Brother. 'These are the tears which the young child and the old dame shed upon thy bosom, the drops of water which thou didst bring to the fainting prisoners, with which thou didst cheer the drooping bird. They have changed into these fair pearls, and returned unto thine own bosom, because in doing it unto them thou didst it unto me. See, there is thy welcome into the home of the blessed.'

"Then looking up, Benito saw written over the door of his Father's house, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'

"And his Brother carried him into his Father's presence, where he cast his pearls at His feet, and was received into His love and care for evermore."

The colonel paused and looked at the children, fearing that he might have made his story too long. But it did not seem so, for they all were so interested that they had quite forgotten everything else. Bessie lay back with her head on his arm, and her eyes fixed on his face as if she feared to lose a word; while even Maggie's restless hands were quite still, lying clasped on the arm of the sofa as she stood motionless beside him. Gracie and Lily had drawn up their chairs and sat in front of him, listening as eagerly as the others; and now Lily drew a long breath, and said, "Is that all?"

"All!" said the colonel. "Yes. Is it not enough? I feared you would be quite tired of me and my story."

"Oh no!" said Lily. "I wish you would tell us stories all day. I should *never* be tired."

"I should, then," said Colonel Rush, smiling. "And it is nearly time for you to go home now."

"Colonel Rush," said Gracie, "isn't your story what is called an allegory?"

"Yes," he answered. "Did you understand it, Bessie?"

"'Most all of it," answered Bessie. "You

meant that even little children can do something for Jesus if they are kind and good, and He won't care if it is only a little thing, if they do it 'cause they love Him."

"You are right, my darling."

"And when the boy went in the wrong road after the butterfly, you meant that we must not do wrong even when we thought it was for a good purpose," said Maggie. "Mamma told me that the other day."

"And the Elder Brother means Jesus," said Lily.

"I am glad you all understand it so well," said the colonel, "and still more glad that you all like it. It was Maggie's little hymn which made me think of it. So you may thank her, too, for any pleasure it has given you."

"And who is Experience?" asked Maggie.

"Experience may be older people who are generally wiser in some things than the little ones, and can help them along, but who may yet learn much from a child."

"Children cannot teach grown people; can they?" said Lily.

"I think they can," said Colonel Rush, laying his hand lovingly on Bessie's head. "The

best lesson I ever learned in my life was taught me by a little child."

"Who?" asked Maggie.

"And what was the lesson?" said Gracie.

"You must not ask," he answered. "Here is your papa, Maggie; and Tom for you, Lily."

The children said good-bye to their kind friends, and went away, promising gladly to come again the next Sunday.

VII.

THE PEACH-STONES.

THOSE peach-stones gave Maggie and Bessie a great deal to do. They were very busy children in those days. On Monday mamma began again with their lessons. They went to her for an nour each morning, after they came from their walk, said a reading and spelling lesson, a little of the multiplication-table, which Maggie said she was sure was made just "to bother little girls," and a verse of poetry; and when the hour was over, had a short sewing lesson. Maggie's "towel task," as she called it, was done later in the day whenever her mamma had time to attend to her.

As soon as the sewing lesson was over, they went to the yard to look after the peach-stones. Patrick saved them all for Bessie, and had found two boards for her on which she might dry them; and never peach-stones needed so much attention.

In the first place there was each morning the plate full which Patrick had collected from the table to be washed and spread out on the boards, and the whole number counted over and over again, for they could never make them twice the same.

Often when they went out, they found the cats had come over the fence, and knocked them down into the earth of the flower garden, and they all had to be washed over again. Then Flossy, who was always with them now, would insist on scrambling over the boards, and would send the peach-stones flying in every direction, for he thought it fine fun to see them rolling about. There is no telling how much they enjoyed all this trouble, or how distressed they would have been if it had been suddenly brought to an end. Indeed, they were quite disappointed if they found everything in good order when they went out in the yard.

"Margaret," said Mr Bradford to his wife one day, as he sat at the library window, watching his little daughters at their work, "how long do you suppose it will take those peach-stones to dry at this rate?"

Mrs Bradford laughed as she came and looked over his shoulder.

"Dear little things!" she said. "How they do enjoy it! I believe they fancy they are doing the chief part of the work for our peach preserves, besides gaining something to add to their store for the library. I shall be sorry when the warm weather is at an end, and I shall have to forbid them to play with water. It gives some trouble, to be sure, in the matter of dresses and aprons, but I have not the heart to stop them, while I do not fear they will take cold."

Nurse grumbled a good deal over the wet dresses and aprons.

"Who ever heard of such doings?" she said one day. "And what's the good of it all? Them little ignoramuses out in the backwoods can't read your books when they get 'em."

Maggie was very much displeased.

"You ought not to talk so, nursey," she said. "If those children don't know how to read, they can be taught. And don't you like to do missionary work?"

"Missionary work," said nurse. "And do you think I'd leave my comfortable home to go missioning?"

"That's because you're not so very good," said Maggie, gravely. "Miss Winslow is going to leave her comfortable home, and go to teach those little children that you called such an unpleasant name; and it's very good of her. Besides, you needn't go away to do missionary work; you can do it here, if you choose."

"And how's that, I'd like to know?" said nursey, whisking off Maggie's wet dress.

"If we want to help people, we can do it without going away," said Maggie, "and sometimes it's our duty to do it, and then that's our mission; mamma said so. Now, nursey, don't you think you have a duty?"

"If I have, I don't need you to teach it to me," said nurse.

"No," said Maggie, "I am not going to teach you, 'cause you are old, and I am little, but I am just going to enter an ex-plan-ation for you, 'cause you don't seem to understand."

At this, Jane, who was dressing Bessie, began to giggle, and nurse put her head into the wardrobe, where the children's dresses lay.

"Now," Maggie went on, "you see Miss Winslow thinks it is her duty to go and teach those log-cabin children, and that's her missionary

work; and it's Bessie's duty and mine to help her if we can, so it 's our missionary work to buy the library; and it 's your duty to dress us if we get ourselves wet while we earn the money, so that 's your missionary work; and you ought to do it with a cheerful mind, and not scold us."

Nurse tried to look grum, but the corners of her mouth were twitching, and when she had fastened Maggie's dress, she gave her a hug and a kiss which did not seem as though she were very angry.

As soon as the little girls had run away to their mamma's room, nurse and Jane laughed heartily.

"Well, well," said nurse, "to hear the reasoning of her! And she has the right of it, too, bless her heart, and just shames her old mammy."

After this there was no more grumbling about the wet dresses.

One night there was a hard storm, and in the morning, when the children went out, they found that the rain had washed sand and gravel all over their precious peach-stones. This, of course, must be attended to immediately, and it was quite a piece of work, for by this time they had collected seven or eight hundred.

"We ought to have something large to wash them in," said Maggie. "What can we find?"

Now, Mrs Bradford had a new cook, who had only been in the house for two or three days; and as the children were seldom allowed to go into the kitchen, she was as yet quite a stranger to them. This cook had not a good temper, but she was very neat, and that morning she had been making a great scrubbing and polishing of her tins, after which she put them out in the sun. Looking about for something in which to wash their peach-stones, Maggie and Bessie saw these tins, and among them a bright new colander.

"Oh, that's just what we want," said Maggie. "Can we take it, Patrick?" she asked of the good-natured servant who was cleaning knives in the area.

"'Deed, and ye may," said Patrick, who thought his little ladies must have everything they asked for.

Much delighted, the children filled the colander with peach-stones, and carrying it to the hydrant, turned on the water, thinking it fine fun to see it stream through the holes of the colander.

Meanwhile Flossy, who was running about the

yard, putting his nose into everything, found a quantity of muffin-rings, and thinking that these would be good things for him to play with, soon had them rolling about in every direction; but our little girls were too busy to see that he was in mischief.

It took some time to wash all the peach-stones, but they were done at last, and just arranged again in regular rows upon the boards, when the cook came out to take in her tins. Angry enough she was when she saw the rings scattered around, and the clean, bright colander smeared with sand and gravel; and terribly she scolded.

"How dare ye!" she said to Maggie and Bessie. "I'll teach ye to touch my tins."

"They're not yours," said Bessie, "they are mamma's. Maggie and I were with her the other day when she bought that basin with holes in it, and she only lent them to you; and, cook, we don't be talked to in that way; mamma don't allow it."

This made the cook still more angry, and she scolded in a way quite terrible to hear, while the children stood looking at her, too much astonished and frightened to answer. But Flossy

never heard any great noise without trying to add his share, and he now began to bark at cook with all his might.

"There now," said Patrick, "don't ye make such a fuss, Bridget, and I 'll just wash yer colander as clane as a new pin. They 're not used to sich talk, isn't the little ladies; for it 's dacent people we are all, Mrs Bradford's help, and not a hard word among us at all, at all. Come now, be civil; and do you run to your play, honeys; it is no harrum you have done."

But the cook would not be pacified, and scolded louder and louder, while the more she scolded the louder Flossy barked.

"Cook," said Bessie, "you are a very naughty woman, and I don't think we 'll keep you."

"Woof, woof," said Flossy.

"Be off with you," said cook. "You 'll fly at me, will you?"

"Woof, woof," said Flossy.

The woman snatched up Patrick's knife-brick, and with a very bad word to the children, was about to throw it at the puppy, when Patrick caught her arm; and the frightened little ones, catching up their dog, scampered off as fast as their feet could carry them.

Up the back steps and through piazza and hall, till they reached the front stairs, where they sat down quite out of breath. For a moment or two neither of them said a word, but sat looking at each other, as if they did not know what to make of all this; while Flossy, thinking he had made noise enough for this time, curled himself up in Maggie's lap for a nap.

At last, Maggie gave a long sigh. "Oh, dear," she said, "what a dreadful woman!"

"And what a wicked word she called us!" said Bessie. "Maggie, what shall we do?"

"We'll have to tell mamma," said Maggie; "she ought to know it."

"But, how can we tell her? I don't like to say that word; and, Maggie, I don't like you to say it either."

"But I s'pose we'll have to," said Maggie. "Mamma wouldn't like to have a swearer in her house."

"And what will be done to the cook?" asked Bessie. "Will she be hung?"

"No, I think not," answered Maggie. "I think they only hang people when they kill somebody. But I s'pose she'll have to be took to prison. Papa's a lawyer, and I think he'll send her."

"I thought the policeman did that," said Bessie.

"I'll tell you," said Maggie. "You know papa goes down to town?"

"Yes, to his office."

"And he goes to another place called 'court,'" said Maggie. "Well, when somebody is very wicked, the police-officer comes and takes him to the lawyer, and he says, 'Mister, this is a very naughty person who has done something very bad;' and the lawyer says, 'Here, you, go to prison, and just behave yourself.' And then the policeman takes him to prison, and locks him up."

"Oh!" said Bessie, looking at her sister with great admiration, "what a wise girl you are! You know almost everything."

"I am going to try and learn a great deal more, so I can tell everybody everything they want to know," said Maggie.

"Maggie, do you think cook has been 'brought up in the way she should go'?"

"No, I don't," said Maggie. "No 'way she should go' about it."

"Then do you think we ought to want her to be punished?"

"I don't want her to be punished," answered Maggie; "at least, not much. But you see she *ought* to be. Anyhow, we must tell mamma, and she 'll know what is best."

"But how *can* we say that word?" said Bessie.

"I 'll tell you," said Maggie, after a moment's thought. "You say half of it, Bessie, and I 'll say the rest. I 'll say the first half."

"Well," said Bessie, with a long sigh. "I suppose we 'll have to. Let 's go and do it quick then. I don't like to think about it."

Maggie laid Flossy down upon the soft mat at the foot of the stairs, and, hand in hand, she and Bessie went up to their mother's room. Now, it so happened that Mrs Bradford had been passing through the upper hall as the little girls sat talking below. She stopped for a moment to see what they were doing, and heard Maggie tell Bessie about the lawyer. They did not see or hear her, and she would not wait to listen, though she was sure from the sound of their voices that they were in trouble, but passed on to her room, where her sister Annie and Mrs Rush were sitting. She told them what Maggie had said, at which they were very much amused.

"Something has happened to distress them," said Mrs Bradford, "and I suppose I shall soon hear of it. If they come up with any droll story, do not laugh, as it seems to be a serious matter to them."

Mrs Rush and Annie Stanton promised to keep sober faces if possible; but they did not know how much their gravity was to be tried. A moment later, the children came in, and with grave, earnest looks, walked directly to their mother.

"Mamma," said Maggie, "we have something dreadful to tell you."

"Such a shocking thing!" said Bessie; "but we *have* to tell you."

"That is right, my darlings," said mamma. "If you have done anything wrong, tell me at once, and I will forgive you."

"It was not us, mamma. It was the new cook. Tell her quick, Maggie."

"Mamma," said Maggie, almost in a whisper, "she called us little dev—"

"—ul," said Bessie.

"s—s—s—s!" said Maggie.

Down went Aunt Annie's face into the sofa-pillows, while Mrs Rush turned quickly toward

the window to hide hers. Mrs Bradford coughed, and put her hand over her mouth, but it was all useless; and Annie's merry laugh was ringing in the children's astonished ears.

Maggie coloured all over, and the tears came in her eyes; while Bessie, with cheeks almost as red, turned angrily to her aunt.

"You oughtn't, you oughtn't!" she said. "It is not a thing to laugh at. It was a shocking, shocking word."

"My darling," began mamma; then she, too, broke down, and laughed with the other ladies.

This was quite too much: Bessie hid her face on Maggie's shoulder, and both burst into tears. Mamma was grave in a moment. She lifted Bessie on her lap, and drew Maggie close to her side.

"My poor little ones," she said, "that was too bad, but we did not mean to hurt your feelings;" and she soothed and petted them till they could look up again, and dry their tears.

"Now tell me all about it," she said; and Bessie told her story with many a grieved sob, ending with, "And then she called us that name, mamma," for she would not trust herself to re-

peat the words which had caused her and Maggie so much distress.

Mrs Bradford was much displeased with the cook, and reproved her; but the woman was saucy, and as she made much trouble in the kitchen, she sent her away. The children were greatly surprised that no policeman came for her, and that she left the house quite quietly, as if nothing extraordinary had happened.

About this time an end came to the washing of peach-stones, for, as the weather became cool, mamma forbade Maggie and Bessie to play with water. So the stones had at last a chance to dry; then Patrick cracked them, and the children took out the kernels. Boiling water was then poured over them, and when it had cooled enough for small fingers, the kernels were fished out; and the skin, which the hot water had loosened, was slipped off by the little girls. After that, mamma allowed them to drop the blanched pits into the jars of preserves; and papa declared that no peaches had ever tasted so good as those sweetmeats which his Maggie and Bessie had helped to make. They had collected thirteen hundred peach-stones, and earned sixty-five cents,

which went into the "library-box" in mamma's drawer. Maggie had hemmed four towels, for which she had been paid twenty cents. This, with papa's twenty-seven bright pennies, made one dollar and twelve cents.

VIII.

THE NEW GLOVES.

"MAGGIE and Bessie," said mamma, one morning, "I want to see your gloves. It is a month to-day since you began to save money for your library."

The gloves were soon brought, and mamma examined them.

"Maggie, your second-best are too shabby to be worn any more," said her mother, "you must take the better ones for everyday, and I shall buy you a new pair."

"Oh, mamma, I would rather keep the old pair, and save the money," said Maggie.

"No, dear; you know I told you I must keep you as neat and well-dressed as usual. You must have what is necessary, and then what is left of the money goes in your box."

"And how much will it take for new gloves, mamma?"

"About seventy-five cents. Then you have had two boot-laces—they are ten cents; that leaves fifteen cents out of the dollar. Bessie's gloves will do, I think, and she has had one boot-lace; that leaves the whole of her dollar, except five cents. Maggie, you must have taken great pains to use fewer laces. This is a great improvement on last month."

But in spite of her mother's praise, Maggie's face looked very long. Bessie had almost the whole of her dollar, and but a few cents were left of her own.

"Mamma," said Bessie, "I think Maggie could not help it, if her second gloves are pretty shabby. The other day Flossy yan away with them, and before we could get them he had chewed one all up. And it was not Maggie's carelessness, 'cause Jane put them on the bed, and Flossy jumped up and pulled them off. Couldn't you take a little of my dollar to help to buy the new gloves, and let Maggie keep some more of hers?"

"That will not do," said mamma, smiling at the generous little girl; "but since it was Flossy's fault that the gloves were spoiled, and Maggie has taken so much pains, I will only take out

fifty cents for the new pair. And I will tell you, Bessie, it is much harder for Maggie to keep her things neat than it is for you, and then she generally puts on her own shoes, while nurse or Jane puts on yours. Suppose next month I add another twenty-five cents to her dollar; are you willing?"

"'Course I am, mamma. I am just as glad as anything. Isn't that nice, Maggie?"

Maggie's face brightened. "And how much have we now, mamma?" she asked.

"Forty cents out of Maggie's dollar, and ninety-five from Bessie's, just make one dollar, thirty-five cents. You have one dollar and twelve cents in your box, which makes in all two dollars, forty-seven cents."

Maggie was quite happy when she found they had such a sum, which mamma told them was nearly half of what they wanted for the library.

Grandmamma's carriage now drove to the door, and she came in and asked Mrs Bradford to go out with her and take the children. Mamma said she could not go herself, for baby was not well, and she did not care to leave her, but the children might go if grandmamma wished. Away they ran to be dressed, full of glee, for shopping

with grandmamma was a great pleasure, and they were almost sure to come home richer than they went. They drove to several places, and when the children thought there was anything interesting to be seen, they went into the shop with their grandmother. If not, they remained in the carriage, and chatted with the coachman, or watched the people passing in the street.

At last they went to a large shop, where Mrs Stanton and Mrs Bradford were in the habit of going, and where Maggie and Bessie felt quite at home. There was a good-natured clerk, who was nurse's nephew, and whenever he saw them, he was sure to have an empty box with a picture cover, or a bright-coloured piece of paper or ribbon to give them. Here grandmamma bought several things which did not much interest the little girls; but at last she took them to another counter, where she said something to the clerk about gloves.

"Why, grandmamma," said Maggie, "are you going to buy gloves? Do you know you have a whole box full at home? I saw them the other day when you let me put your drawer in order."

But Mrs Stanton only smiled, and pinched

Maggie's round cheek, and just then the gloves were put before them. Oh, such gloves as those were never meant for grandmamma's hand! Kid gloves they were too, and who had ever seen any so small before? In her surprise and pleasure, Maggie had almost forgotten that she had been forbidden to handle anything when she went shopping; but just as her hand touched the gloves, she remembered, and drew it back. But the good-natured shopman gave them to her, telling her to look at them if she pleased.

"Just like ladies' gloves," said Bessie, who, stretching up on tiptoe, could just see above the counter. Grandmamma lifted her and seated her upon it.

"Do you call that a hand?" said she, playfully, taking Bessie's little fingers in her own. "Mr Jones, have you a pair small enough for that?"

How Bessie wished her hand was larger as the shopman shook his head! But after looking through the whole bundle, a pair was found which grandmamma thought would do, and then a pair for Maggie was picked out with less trouble. They were wrapped in separate parcels, and each child took her own, feeling quite as if she must have grown taller since she came to that

counter. Then the clerk gave them each a piece of fancy paper,—Maggie's, gilt, with flowers stamped upon it, Bessie's, blue, with silver stars.

As soon as they reached home, they ran to show mamma their treasures, but Mrs Bradford noticed that Maggie did not seem half so eager as usual when she had received any new pleasure. While Bessie was talking as fast as her little tongue could go, she stood almost silent at her mother's knee, drawing her fingers slowly back and forward over her gilt paper.

"What makes our Maggie so quiet?" Mrs Bradford asked. "Are you not pleased with your grandmother's pretty present, dear?"

"Oh, yes, mamma! but I was just considering about it a little."

"What were you considering?"

"If it was quite fair for me to wear the gloves, mamma. Do you think it is?"

"Why should it not be fair, Maggie? Grandmamma gave you the gloves for your own; did she not?"

"Oh, yes, mamma; but then she did not know you gave me glove allowance; and maybe she would not have bought them for me if she

had known. And now you won't have to get me another pair this month. So maybe you won't think I ought to have the gloves and the money too. I want to be quite very fair, indeed I do, mamma, and I didn't know how to think it was quite right. Besides, those gloves are nicer than the kind you buy for us, and perhaps you would think you ought to take a little more of my dollar for them. If you would, I would rather have a pair of the other kind, and put these away, and let the money go in the library-box."

"You may wear the gloves and welcome, my dear, honest little girl," said Mrs Bradford, drawing Maggie to her, and kissing her. "It is quite fair for you to do so. Grandmamma knew that I gave you a certain sum for your gloves, and I think she meant to help you a little by buying these for you. I am glad my darling child wishes to be honest and upright in all she does. But I must be quite fair too. I told you I should give you so much a month, and take from it what you needed for gloves and shoe-laces, and whatever was left you might keep for another purpose. Now since grandmamma has given you these, there is no need

for me to buy you another pair; but it would not be just for me to take from you any part of the money they would have cost. It is *your* gain, not *mine*. When a bargain has been made, we must hold to it, even though things turn out differently from what was expected."

"But you need not hold to this bargain, if you do not wish to, mamma."

"Indeed, I do wish to, Maggie, and you need not feel in the least troubled about it. I am not only satisfied, but very glad that you have received this little help."

After this, Maggie's mind was at rest, and she wore her new gloves with great pleasure.

"Hallo!" said Fred, as he and Harry came into the library that afternoon, and found their little sisters quietly playing in one corner. "What scrumptious paper! Where did you get that, Midget?"

"Mr Jones, nurse's nephew, gave it to us," said Maggie. "He gave me the gold piece, and Bessie the silver piece, but we cut them in two, and each took half."

"I wish I could get hold of such friends as you do," said Fred. "Somebody is always giving you something. How do you manage it?"

"We don't manage it," said Bessie, who thought that Fred meant to say that she and Maggie liked their friends for what they gave them. "We don't manage it, and we don't get hold of them, Fred. Our friends give us things because they like to do it, and we never ask for anything; do we, Maggie?"

"No," said Maggie: "and you ought not to talk so, Fred."

"I didn't mean to say anything," said he, "but it is true, is it not? Are not people always making you presents, and taking you to places, and doing other things to give you pleasure?"

"Yes," said Maggie, "but they do it because they like us. If anybody loves anybody, it is a pleasure to do a favour to them. We think it is; don't we, Bessie?"

"Oh, that is it, is it?" said Fred. "Well then, you love me; don't you?"

"'Course we do, because you're our brother; and we'd love you a great deal more if you didn't tease us, Fred."

"Well, if you love me, and it is such a pleasure to do things for people you love, you can please yourselves very much by giving me some of this paper."

"Oh, we can't; we want it ourselves," said Maggie, while Bessie took up both pieces of paper, and put her hands behind her, as if she feared that Fred would run off with them.

"Ho, ho," said he; "then you love yourselves better than you do me?"

"Fred," said Mr Bradford who was sitting on the other side of the room, "do not tease your sisters."

"I did not mean to tease them, papa; but as Maggie thinks it so delightful to please people whom one loves, I was only giving her a chance to do it, and she don't seem to care to take it. I say, Hal, wouldn't this paper be jolly to make stars and things for our new kites?"

"First-rate," said Harry. "I 'll tell you what, Midget and Bess, will you sell it?"

"No," said Bessie, rather crossly, "we want it for dresses for our paper dolls. You do tease us, and we want you to go away, even if you say you don't mean to, and you shan't"— Bessie stopped, and then went on again in a pleasanter voice. "Please to 'scuse me, Fred. I didn't mean to be so cross, but we are so busy, and we 'd yather you wouldn't interyupt us."

These last words were said in a very polite

little manner, which rather amused the boys. Fred had been ready with a sharp answer when Bessie began so angrily; but now, when he saw her check her quick temper, he was ashamed to provoke her.

"Just as you choose," he said; "but you are in such a way in these days to lay up money for your mission-books that I thought you would be willing enough to sell it."

"Children," said Mr Bradford, again looking up from his writing, "if you cannot play without disputing, I shall separate you. Fred, your little sisters were quiet and happy before you came in. Do not let me have to speak to you again, my boy."

Now here was the consequence of having a bad character. Fred had not intended to vex the children, but he was so in the habit of teasing them that they were afraid of him, and thought he meant it when he did not; while his father, who had not heard much of what was passing, but who had been disturbed by the fretful tone of Bessie's voice, took it for granted that Fred was annoying her. But Bessie was too honest to let him be blamed when he had not deserved it.

"Fred was not naughty, papa," she said, "I'm fraid it was me. I was cross."

"Very well," said her father, who thought it best to let them settle the difficulty themselves, if they could do it peaceably; "only let there be no more quarrelling."

"Suppose we go and finish our kites," said Harry. Fred agreed, and the two boys went away.

"Bessie," said Maggie, presently, "I'm just of a good mind to give Harry a piece of my paper."

"For some pennies?" asked Bessie.

"No; mamma said it was not nice for brothers and sisters to sell things to one another; and she don't want us to be too anxious to get money, even for our library. I'm just going to give it to him, 'cause that day when he asked me for the shell, I said I would sell it to him; and then he'll see I am not a miser."

"Well," said Bessie, "then I'll give Fred a piece of mine, 'cause I was cross to him just now."

"Harry shall have my gold piece," said Maggie, "and then we'll divide these two 'tween ourselves."

"So we will," said Bessie; "then we will all have some. Maggie, you do arrange everything so nice."

Away they ran to their brothers' playroom.

"Holloa!" said Fred, when he saw them; "we are not such plagues but that you had to run after us, eh?"

"We came to bring you some of our paper," said Maggie. "This piece is for you, Harry, and Bessie's is for Fred."

"Well, you are first-rate little chaps," said Fred; "and Hal and I will make each of you a nice little kite; see if we don't."

"Oh, Fred!" said Bessie.

"What's the matter now? Shan't you like that?"

"Ladies are not chaps," said Bessie, gravely, "and they don't play with kites."

"Oh, you're a big lady, aren't you?" said he, laughing.

"I can be a lady if I'm not so very big. Mamma says anybody can be a lady or a gemperlum, if they are kind and polite, even if they are very little, or even if they are poor."

"All right," said Fred. "Then I suppose that lady won't accept a kite from this gemperlum."

"Don't say it that way; you must say gem-per-lum."

"Well, don't I say gem-per-lum?"

"That's not the way," said Bessie, her colour rising, for she knew that Fred was laughing at her, and she thought it was hard.

"Fred," said Harry, "you are breaking your resolution already."

"That is so. What a fellow I am!"

"Fred," said Bessie, "gemperlums don't tease. Papa is a gemperlum, and he never teases."

"And mamma said Tom Norris was a perfect little gentleman, and he does not tease. I guess gentlemen always 'do to others as they would,'" said Maggie, who was very fond of this line.

"They ought to if they do not," said Harry, "and no one can say that you don't keep that rule, Maggie."

"When people have angry passions, it's very hard not to get in one when they're teased," said Bessie. "Fred, I do have to try so very, very hard."

Fred threw down his kite, and caught his little sister in his arms.

"See if I plague you any more then," he said. "I was just telling Harry I did not mean to do

it, and the first thing I am at it again; but I will try to remember, Bess. Harry, if I forget again, I give you leave to bring me up short the best way you can."

Fred kept his word, and after this took much pains to break himself of his provoking habit.

IX.

TWO LOST PETS.

THAT night Maggie had a very bad earache. She tried to be patient; but the pain was so severe that she could not help crying, and could get no rest. Her father and mother were up with her almost all night, trying to give her ease; but nothing did her any good until towards morning, when she fell into a troubled sleep.

"Margaret," said Mr Bradford, at the breakfast-table, "is that committee coming here this morning?"

"Yes," answered Mrs Bradford.

"Mamma," said Bessie, "may I see it?"

"See what?—the committee?"

"Yes, mamma."

Mrs Bradford smiled. "I do not think you would care much about it, Bessie, and the committee will be too busy with its own affairs to care to see you."

"Why, is it alive?" asked Bessie, in great surprise.

"To be sure," said Fred, before his mother could answer; "did you never see one?"

"No," said Bessie; "could it bite me or scratch me?"

"It could if it had a mind to," said Fred, "and ——" He was stopped by Harry's hand over his mouth. Fred drew back his head, and looked angry.

"You gave me leave," said Harry.

"So I did," said Fred. "I beg your pardon, Bess, for plaguing you once more. The committee won't hurt you; it's nothing but a lot of ladies."

"You should beg your mother's pardon also for answering a question addressed to her," said Mr Bradford; "it is a rude thing to do. Come to me, Bessie." He took her upon his knee, saying, "A committee is a number of people who are appointed to attend to some particular thing. You know that the ladies in our church are going to make up some clothing to send to the children at the Five Points' Mission; do you not?"

"Yes, papa."

"Well, several of these ladies have been asked to make all the arrangments for the meetings, and to have everything in order, so that there may be no confusion when they come together to sew; and they are called a committee. Your mamma is one of the committee, and the ladies are to come here this morning. Do you understand?"

"Yes, papa."

It was quite late when Maggie awoke, long past breakfast-time; and after she was dressed, she found her breakfast arranged for her in the doll's tea-set, and Bessie ready to wait upon her. But our poor little Maggie could not enjoy even this very much; she was languid, and quite tired out with pain, and her troublesome ear would not let itself be forgotten, so that she did not feel much like play. Mamma took her on her lap, rocked her, and read a new story-book, which suited much better.

"I am sorry that I shall have to leave you for a while, dear," she said. "If I had known that I was to have a little sick girl this morning, I would not have asked the ladies to come here; but as it is, I must go down. I do not think I shall be away more than an hour, and you will

be patient; will you not? Nurse will take care of you."

"And I will yead to her," said Bessie.

So when the ladies came, and mamma had to go down stairs, she laid Maggie on the lounge, and covered her up, while Bessie sat down close beside her, with "Very Little Tales," and "Susie's Six Birthdays." Jane had taken Franky to the park, and nurse, seeing Maggie so quiet and comfortable, thought that she might leave her awhile.

"Baby 's a bit fretful," she said, "and it 's a shame to keep her in the house this pleasant day. "I 'll just take her on the side-walk for a little fresh air. I 'll not go out of sight, just up and down here a piece, and if Maggie wants anything, you can come down and call me, Bessie. I know you are to be trusted not to get in mischief."

Bessie was rather proud of being left to take care of Maggie, and willingly agreed to let nurse go. The house seemed very still after she had taken baby away. Bessie heard nothing but the sound of her own sweet little voice, as she read "Susie," and, presently looking up, she saw that Maggie was fast asleep.

Flossy lay on the foot of the lounge, rolled up

into a round ball, but with his bright eyes wide open, watching Bessie. He had been frisking about Maggie all the morning, trying to coax her to a game of play, but he found it was of no use. He did not understand why his merry playmate should be so quiet, nor did he approve of it. But he could not help it; and so, like a wise dog, he seemed to have made up his mind to bear it, though he lay watching and listening for the least sign of better times.

Bessie laid down her book, and sat looking at Maggie. "My poor Maggie," she said to herself, "she's so good and patient. I wish I could do something for her, and I wish Aunt Annie, or somebody, would come and see us, and tell her a story while mamma is down stairs. Oh, I wish Colonel Yush would come; he tells us better stories than any one. Wouldn't it be nice if he was to come while Maggie is asleep? and then she'd see him when she wakes up, and she'd be so glad. If he knew she was ill, I'm sure he would come. I'll just go out on the side-walk, and ask nursey if she won't take me over to the hotel-door, and then I'll go up to my soldier's room and ask him to come and see Maggie."

She rose up softly from her chair and went into the nursery, followed by Flossy, who, being very wide awake himself, had no mind to be left with the sleeping Maggie, and jumped down from the lounge to run after Bessie as soon as she stirred. Bessie went to the closet and took down her garden hat and cloak from the peg where they hung. The hat was very shabby, for it had been worn all summer at the sea-shore, and had seen some hard use in the garden since she came home. But she could not reach her best one, and said to herself that this would do, if nurse would only let her wear it, of which she was not at all sure. She put it on, walked down stairs, and out upon the front step, but she saw no sign of nurse. Up and down the street she looked, but the old woman was nowhere to be seen.

Now the truth was, that nurse had not intended to lose sight of the front door, but as she passed Mr Hall's house, Miss Carrie was at the basement window, and calling her, begged that she would bring the baby and let her speak to her. Nurse, always proud to show off her pet, was willing enough, and for a few moments quite forgot her other nurslings, as well as the open

front-door; and it was just during these few moments that Bessie came out to look for her.

"Nurse said she wouldn't go far away," said Bessie to herself, "and she has, and now I can't go and find the colonel, 'cause mamma wouldn't like me to go alone."

Flossy had run down to the foot of the steps, and there he stood, wagging his tail, whisking and frisking, and altogether behaving like a puppy who had quite taken leave of his senses, so glad was he to be out of doors.

"We can't go, Flossy," said Bessie, as, with a sigh, she turned to go into the house. "We're very disappointed, but we must mind mamma. Come, Flossy, come. Don't you leave me, Flossy."

But Flossy was not so obedient as his little mistress, and instead of coming back, he ran a short distance up the street, and then stopped, barking joyously, and looking back to see if she were following. Bessie went down the steps, calling him over and over again in such a coaxing voice, that it was strange even such a wilful doggie could resist. But it was of no use. Away went Flossy as fast as he could run, and fright-

ened at the thought of losing her pet, and forgetting everything else, away went Bessie after him. Up to the end of the block, around the corner, and so down the other side of the square, till they came to the long, crowded crossing, over which Bessie was never allowed to go without some grown person to hold her hand. Over it went Flossy, in and out among the carriages and omnibuses, escaping the wheels and the horses' hoofs in a way that was quite wonderful to see, until he reached the opposite corner, where he again waited for Bessie. But poor Bessie dared not cross by herself, and stood still in great trouble.

"I wish I was over at the hotel," she said to herself, as she looked up at the great building opposite, "and then the colonel would take me home."

There was generally a tall policeman at the corner, whom Bessie knew quite well, for he had often taken her hand and led her over, or sometimes even carried her if the stones were wet, but now he was not there. In his place was another, who was a stranger to her, and now he came over to her corner. Bessie went up to him.

"Will you please tell me where my policeman is, sir?" she said.

"Who is your policeman?" said the officer.

"I don't know his name, but he takes me over the crossing, and mamma don't 'low me to go alone."

"I suppose I can take you over as well as another," said he; "but your mother must be a queer one to allow you to go out alone at all."

"She didn't," said Bessie, "and I didn't mean to, but Flossy yan away, and I went to get him. Please take me over; I am afraid somebody will catch him; then I'll go to the colonel's yoom, and he'll take me home."

The policeman lifted her up, and carried her to the opposite side-walk. Flossy was off again as soon as he saw her near him, but the officer ran after him, and soon had him safe in Bessie's arms.

"And what are you going to do now?" said the good-natured man. "You're over small for running about the streets by yourself."

"I am going to the colonel's," said Bessie. "I know the way, and he'll take care of me."

She thanked him, and ran off; but the police

man followed till he saw her go into the hotel as if she were quite sure of her way.

"She's all right," he said to himself, and then went back to his post, thinking no more about the little stray lamb whom he had only helped into farther trouble.

Bessie found her way without difficulty to the colonel's room, and seeing the door open, she peeped in. There was no one there but a servant-woman, who was dusting.

"Where is my soldier?" asked Bessie.

"Your soldier?" said the woman. "If you mean the lame gentleman, he and the lady have gone out to ride. I don't want you here bothering round with your dogs. Go back to your own rooms;" for the woman supposed Bessie to be some child who belonged in the hotel.

"My soldier lets me come in his yoom when I choose, and it isn't yours to talk about," said Bessie, very much offended, and she walked away with her head very straight.

What should she do now? She would go back to the corner, she thought, and ask her friend, the policeman, to take her home. But she was becoming a little confused and frightened with all her troubles, and when she left

the hotel, turned the wrong way. On she went, farther and farther from home, though she did not know it, and expected every moment to see the well-known crossing. Some few people turned and looked at her, as she passed with her dog clasped in her arms; but she did not act at all like a lost child, and it was easy enough to think that she was some little girl playing about her home and perhaps watched by loving eyes.

At last she came near a broad avenue, where the carriages were passing up and down, and then she knew she was not on her way home. But just then she heard music, and her eye was caught by a new sight. Quite a crowd was gathered upon the side-walk, where were two men, one with a hand-organ, the other with a table on which little figures of gaily-dressed men and women were spinning around. Bessie stopped to look, standing back from the crowd; but three or four rough boys who were hanging about took notice of her and her dog. Presently they came up to her.

"Whose dog is that?" asked one.

"Mine and Maggie's," said Bessie.

"You give him to me, and I'll give you this,"

said the boy taking a large red apple from his pocket.

"I can't even if I wanted to," said Bessie, "'cause he 's half Maggie's."

"Well, you give me your half, and Maggie's will run after it."

"No," said the little girl. "I wouldn't give you my Flossy for fifty seventeen apples;" and she walked away, but the boys followed.

"Where did you get so much hat?" said one.

"It is not much," said Bessie. "It is old and torn, 'cause I carried peach-stones in it. Mamma is going to give it away."

"I don't know who'd thank her for it," said another. "I guess your ma spent all her money on your frock, and left none for your hat."

"She didn't," said Bessie, angrily; "she has plenty left."

"She's right stingy, then, to give you such a hat; it's only fit for the gutter, so here goes!" and the rude boy twitched off the unlucky hat, and sent it flying into the middle of the street, where a car passed over it. Bessie did not care much about her hat, but she was frightened and displeased.

"You are very yude," she said, "and I won't walk by you. You shan't talk so about my mamma."

"Maybe we'll walk by you though," said the boy, and they kept by her side for a few steps farther, when suddenly, with a loud yelp of pain, Flossy sprang from her arms, for one of the boys had pinched his tail so as to hurt him very much. The boys shouted, Flossy ran, they after him, and the next moment one of them caught him up, and they all disappeared with him round the corner.

Bessie ran on a few steps and then stood still, crying loudly with terror and distress. Several persons immediately stopped, asking her what ailed her, and if she were lost; but she only called, "Oh, Flossy, Flossy! oh, mamma! oh, Maggie."

Among the people who stopped was an old lady, who looked at Bessie through her spectacles in rather a severe manner, and as she asked questions in a quick, sharp way, the little girl felt afraid of her, and would not answer. Poor lost baby! There she stood, bareheaded, with the wind blowing her curls, her tiny hands over her face, crying so pitifully that some of those

who stood by felt as if they must cry with her, but still no one could get a word from her.

But presently a policeman came by, and Bessie, looking up, saw him and was a little comforted; for though he, too, was a stranger, she felt somehow as if every policeman was a friend; and she ceased her loud cries, though her sobs still came heavy and fast.

"Here 's a lost child," said one of the crowd.

"Please take me home, sir," said Bessie, stretching out her hands to him.

The tall officer was pleased, and, stooping, lifted the little creature in his arms.

'Where do you belong?" he asked kindly.

"In mamma's house," said Bessie.

"And where is mamma?"

"In a committee," answered the child.

"Humph!" said the old lady, who stood close at the policeman's side, "in a committee, with a parcel of other foolish women, I suppose, while her babies go running wild about the streets. She'd better attend to her own affairs."

"She hadn't," said Bessie, who thought every one had something to say against her own dear mother,—"she hadn't, and you are naughty to say that. She's a nice, pretty lady, and better than

"'Please take me home, sir.'" Page 204.

anybody, and not a bit foolish; and, oh, I do want her so, I do want her so!" and she began to cry afresh.

"There then, never mind!" said the policeman; "we'll find her very soon. Can't you tell me where you live?"

Bessie had long since been taught this, but now, in her fright and distress, she quite forgot the street and number of the house, and only shook her head.

"Tell me your name then," said the man.

"Bessie—Yush—Byad-ford," sobbed the child.

"Brightford—Brightford," repeated the policeman. "Does any one here know any people of the name of Brightford?"

Poor little Bessie! Between her sobs and the difficulty of pronouncing her r's, the officer had quite mistaken the name, and no one answered.

"You'll have to take her to the station-house," said the old lady.

"Oh, no, Mr Policeman, I'm not to be taken up,—indeed, I'm not," said Bessie. "I wasn't naughty, and mamma won't say so, only Flossy yan away, and the Colonel wasn't in his yoom, and I can't find my street."

"Poor baby!" said the policeman, as he felt

her trembling in his arms. "Nobody shall hurt you, my child; but if your people miss you, they will send up to the station, and if I take you there, they will find you at once. You can't tell where your mamma lives, hey?"

"I sha'n't talk about my mamma," said Bessie; "everybody says naughty things about her; but I want to go to her, and please find Flossy, Mr Policeman."

"Who is Flossy?" asked he.

"He's her dog, I guess," said a boy who stood by. "Four big fellows ran away with him. I se'ed 'em. They cut up the alley, and down by the back lots. I guess you must cotch 'em in a hurry, or see no more of the pup."

"Don't you believe that," said the policeman, as Bessie's tears and sobs came faster than ever. "We'll find him for you one of these days; but now I must see you safe;" and he moved on with the little girl in his arms.

"Do you think some one will come and find me very soon?" she asked.

"To be sure they will. Have you a papa?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you be sure when he finds you are gone, he'll come right off to the station-house to

see if you are there. Why, the other day I picked up a little chap in the street, not nigh as big as you. He could scarce walk, and couldn't speak a word plain, and there, when I got him to the station, was his mother waiting for him."

So the officer talked on kindly and pleasantly, till Bessie was a little comforted, and when they reached the station, looked eagerly round to see if any of her own friends were there awaiting her. But no, there was no one there yet, only several policemen were sitting or standing about, to one of whom Bessie's protector spoke, telling him where he had found her.

"And now I am going back to my beat," he said to the child, "and if any one comes that way looking for you, I'll send them right up here."

Bessie's lip began to tremble once more. She had been terribly disappointed to find that no one was waiting for her; and now here was her new friend going away, and leaving her with these strangers.

"Don't you cry any more," said the second policeman, taking her from the arms of the first. "Why, those brown eyes of yours are almost washed out. Come along with me, and

see me send off a telegraph message to the other stations to say you 're here."

"I couldn't help crying," said the little girl, "I had so many troubles to-day."

"Bless your heart!" said the sergeant. "You shall tell me all about them presently. Why, you are just about the size of my Jenny, and I wouldn't like to see her looking that way."

When the policeman spoke of telling him her troubles, it came into Bessie's mind that she had not told them to her Father in heaven, and covering her face with her little hands, she whispered, "Dear Father in heaven, please let my own home father come and find me very soon, 'cause I 'm so tired, and I want my own mamma; and don't let those naughty boys hurt my Flossy, and let papa find him too."

The officer heard the low soft whisper so close to his ear, though she had not meant he should. "Bless her!" he said to himself, "I guess her father 'll be brought along pretty soon after that."

Bessie was now quite interested in watching the working of the telegraph wires which were put in motion to carry the message that a stray child was to be found at this station. One of

the men who had gone out came back, bringing her a cake and an apple, but though it was long past her usual dinner hour, she could not eat.

"Now," said the sergeant, sitting down and putting her upon his knee, "let us hear all about those troubles of yours;" for the kind man thought if he could make her talk of herself, he might find out where she belonged.

X.

HOME AGAIN! HOME AGAIN!

MEANWHILE the stray birdling had been missed from the home-nest, and great was the trouble and alarm there. Nurse, coming in, found Maggie at the head of the stairs with a discontented face.

"What's happened ye?" she asked; "and what are ye standing here in the draught for? Go back to the nursery, my honey."

"I can't find Bessie," said Maggie. "I went to sleep, and when I woke up, she was gone, and Flossy was gone too, and I looked all over, and they are not here."

"She hasn't taken wings, and flown away," said nurse. "You mind baby a moment, and I'll hunt her up for you."

Nurse hunted in vain, and at last told Maggie she thought Bessie must have found her way into the parlour, where the ladies were talking.

"She'll soon tire of it, and come back to you," she said; "but it was not like her to go off and leave you."

But the time passed on; Jane came in with Franky; the children's dinner-bell rang, and still Bessie did not come. At last the ladies of the committee went away, and mamma came out of the parlour, but no little girl was with her. Then the whole house was searched, upstairs and down, from cellar to attic; but the pet was not found.

"Could her grandmamma, or aunt, or Mrs Rush, have come and taken her out?" said Jane.

"They would not be so thoughtless; they would know I should be anxious if they left no word," said Mrs Bradford, who was growing very much alarmed.

"No one came in; for I did not have my eyes off the front door while I was out on the side-walk," said nurse. "Yes, I did, too, just a couple of minutes, while I spoke to Miss Hall; but no one could have come in and gone out, too, without my seeing them."

Ah, nurse, nurse, it was just those two minutes when you forgot your duty, which did all the mischief.

"And there 's her hat," said Jane, looking in the box. "Ah, there 's her garden hat and cloak gone. Now maybe she 's just run out after you, nurse, and somebody 's caught her and run away with her when you wasn't looking. I've heard of such things, and how they make 'em beg, and beat 'em and frighten 'em so they don't dare tell where they belong."

This was very pleasant for the poor anxious mother, who, however, told Jane that was nonsense; while nurse, who knew she was to blame in letting her attention be called off, grew very angry and scolded Jane, saying she must have seen Bessie if she left the house.

Nevertheless, Bessie was certainly not in the house; and one servant was sent to grandmamma's, another to the hotel, to see if any trace could be found of the missing treasure; while Mrs Bradford herself ran to all the neighbours, and poor Maggie stood by the window crying bitterly for her lost sister. In a little time grandmamma and Aunt Annie were on the spot, as anxious as the rest, to see if they could help in the search. As people were running in all directions, it seemed to grandmamma that the best thing she could do was to comfort poor, dis-

tressed Maggie. But Maggie was not to be comforted, and declared that she knew she should never, never, never see Bessie again. "Oh, I am so very sorry I went to sleep," she sobbed. "I just expect she went to heaven in a chariot of fire when no one was looking." Grandmamma could not smile at Maggie's strange idea, she was so anxious herself, but she told her this could not be so; and that Bessie had probably run out in the street and so lost her way.

"But Bessie would not do such a thing, grandmamma; she would know mamma would not like it, and she never disobeys her."

"Perhaps your mother never told her she was not to go out alone, dear, and so she was tempted to run a few steps, and then could not find her way back."

"Oh, no, indeed, grandmamma. Bessie knew quite well mamma would not wish us to go alone even if she did not say so; and she would think it was just the same; and Bessie never falls into temptation except about passions. If it was me, maybe I might; and I know she'll never come back; and oh, I cannot do without her, we are so very intimate, grandmamma."

Grandmamma said she was almost sure Bessie

would soon be found, and told Maggie how well everything was arranged at the police stations, so that if a little child was lost, it could soon be restored to its friends. Still Maggie only shook her head sorrowfully, feeling it quite impossible to believe that Bessie had gone away of her own free will.

Then Mrs Bradford came in, looking very pale and troubled, for she could hear nothing of her lost baby; but a moment after Patrick came with news. The policeman at the corner told how he had helped a little girl over the crossing, and seen her safe in the hotel, and that she had said she was going to see the Colonel; but that he could tell nothing farther. Patrick had gone to the Colonel's rooms, but they were closed and locked; and he heard that the Colonel and Mrs Rush had been out for a long while.

Hearing this, Mrs Bradford and her sister went round to the hotel, and giving the alarm, the great building was searched from top to bottom. Every room and closet, every hall and corridor, even the roof, and the cellar far underground where the gas was made, were looked through; but still no Bessie. But when the servants were questioned, the woman who had spoken to Bessie

told how she had come to the Colonel's room, and then walked off.

"She has probably wandered out again, madam," was said to the pale mother by one of the gentlemen who had been helping in the search; "and now you had better at once send to the police station, and give notice of her loss."

As Mrs Bradford was leaving the hotel to do this, the Colonel and Mrs Rush drove up. In two minutes they had heard all that was known, and the Colonel said he would himself go to the station.

The station to which Bessie had been taken was not the one nearest to Mr Bradford's house; and it was to the latter that the Colonel drove first. He did not find his lost pet there, of course; but he heard that a telegram had come some time since, saying that a stray child was at the station in —— Street, and there he went as fast as his horse's feet could carry him.

We left the little girl who had caused all this commotion sitting upon the knee of the kind sergeant of police, while he coaxed her to tell him the story of her troubles, in the hope that he might find out where she belonged.

"You don't look big enough for such a many

troubles," he said; "now let's hear about them, and see what we can do. What was the first one?"

"First Maggie had a earache and cried; and then mamma had a committee, and had to leave us; and then I could not find nurse, and Flossy yan away," said Bessie; and the poor child began to cry again at the thought of Flossy.

"And who is Flossy?" asked the sergeant.

"He is our puppy that Donald gave us,—Maggie's and mine."

"And who is Maggie?"

"My own sister; don't you know that?"

"Indeed, I did not," said the policeman. "What is her name?"

"Maggie Stanton Byadford," said the child.

"And what is yours?"

"Bessie Yush Byadford."

The policeman shook his head; still he could make nothing of the name.

"And when Flossy ran away, you ran after him, did you?" he asked.

"Yes, but I didn't mean to, sir; I forgot mamma wouldn't want me to, and Flossy yan so fast. He went away over the long crossing, and our policeman was not there."

"Who 's your policeman?"

"I don't know his name, only he helps us over the long crossing, when we want to go to the hotel."

"Ho, ho, I think we are coming at it," said the sergeant. "What hotel is that?"

"Why, the hotel where the Colonel lives," said Bessie, as if there could be but one hotel and one colonel. "I thought mamma would not like me to go home by myself, and I asked that other policeman whom I did not know to take me over, so I could go ask the Colonel to send me home. But he was out, and a woman scolded me, and so I went away, and the crossing wouldn't come, and the boys were naughty and yude, and Flossy's gone—oh, dear! oh, dear! I do want my own house and my own mamma; and everybody said naughty things about mamma."

"There, then, don't cry any more," said the policeman. "I think that must be the hotel, and you can't tell me what street you live in?"

"Why, yes, I can," said Bessie, who quite forgot that she had not been able to tell where she lived while she had been so frightened. "I live in papa's house in —— Street, number —, and I want to go home so much."

"So you shall, now that you have told me where you belong," said the policeman. "I'll send, and see if you are right."

But just as he turned to speak to one of the men, an open carriage drove quickly to the door. Bessie looked around, then gave a scream of joy.

"Oh, it's my soldier, my own dear soldier! He came and found me—oh, he did, he did!"

In less time than it would have been thought possible, the Colonel had been helped out, and was within the room. Bessie almost sprang out of the policeman's arms, and clung about the Colonel's neck, while he, dropping one crutch, steadied himself on the other, and held her fast with the arm that was free. It was touching to see, as, half laughing, half crying, she poured out broken words of love and joy, now covering his face with kisses, now burying her own on his shoulder, then lifting it again to lay her soft cheek to his and pat it with her tiny hand. Colonel Rush was almost as much overjoyed as she, but he was in haste to carry the recovered treasure to her anxious mother. Nor was Bessie in less haste to be at home; but for all that, she did not forget to speak her thanks to those who had been kind to her, going from one to another,

and shaking hands with them in her own polite little way. The sergeant carried her out and put her in the carriage.

"Good-bye," she said, giving him her hand, "I am very much obliged to you for letting me come in your nice station-house, and for speaking so kind to me."

"Bless your heart," said the man, "if it wasn't for your own sake, I'd be sorry enough to part with you. Now don't you go and lose yourself again."

"I did not lose myself," said Bessie; "I just came lost, I did not mean to do it."

"I don't believe you did," said the man; "good-bye to you."

Then the colonel put something into his hand, and they drove home as fast as possible. Oh, what joy there was over the little darling who had been so long away! Mamma held her fast and cried over her; it seemed as if she could never let her go out of her arms again; Maggie jumped about and clapped her hands, and kissed Bessie's face, hands, dress, and even her feet; Franky did as he saw Maggie do, saying, "Bessie tome, all nice now." Grandmamma, Aunt Annie, and Mrs Rush were quite as much rejoiced, and

the very servants had to take part in the welcome. Even the new cook, whom the children scarcely knew, had to come in for a peep at the dear little cause of all this excitement. Then papa, who had been sent for, that he might help in the search for his lost daughter, came home to find the sorrowing changed into rejoicing, and Bessie running to the front door to meet him, saying,—

"I am quite found, papa. I asked our Father to let you find me, and He sent the colonel instead, but that was just as good when he brought me home; wasn't it?"

"Quite as good, perhaps even better, darling, since dear mamma was spared another hour of anxiety, and you one of waiting. Our heavenly Father often does better for us than we ask, although we may not always know it."

"And you don't think I was naughty; do you, papa? Mamma does not."

"I must hear the story first; but now let me thank our good, kind colonel, who has put himself to some trouble, I am sure, to find you."

When Mr Bradford had heard Bessie's story, which she told in her own straightforward way, he satisfied her by saying that he did not think

her in the least naughty, since he was sure she had not meant to disobey. He would not consent that grandmamma and Aunt Annie, and Colonel and Mrs Rush should go home to dinner; they must all stay and have a great jubilee over the happy ending to Bessie's adventures. And oh, such a pleasure! The children were allowed to take dinner with the grown people, a treat which was only granted on great occasions.

"It's just like the man in the Bible, who lost his sheep and found it, and called all his friends to come and be glad, and have a nice time with him," said Maggie, "only we're a great deal more glad than that man, because our Bessie is a great deal better than the sheep, and we don't have ninety and nine, either."

"No," said papa, "we have only one Bessie and one Maggie, and a very good Maggie and Bessie they are of their kind. I would not change them for any others that could be offered to me. How is the ear, Maggie?"

"Oh, it's most well, papa. When I felt so bad about Bessie, I forgot about it, and when I was so glad, the pain just went away before I knew it."

"So the greater trouble cured the lesser, eh?"

"But, papa," said Bessie, "we have a great, great trouble with all our happiness. You know Flossy is quite lost, and we'll never have him to play with again."

"I am not sure about that," said Mr Bradford; "I shall go to-morrow and see what I can do to find him. Still I have not much hope, and you must not think too much about it?"

"You mean you will do all you can, papa," said Bessie, sorrowfully; "but probably we will never see our dear Flossy again."

"Never mind, Bessie," said Maggie, tenderly; "it is not very much matter if we don't. We have you back again, so we've no reason to complain."

Dear, generous-hearted little Maggie! She would not say how badly she felt about Flossy, lest Bessie should think she blamed her for his loss, but it was a great trial to her, as her father knew. She was more fond of him than Bessie was, and Flossy cared more for her than he did for any one else. Never were two merrier playfellows, and their droll antics and frolics were a source of great amusement to the whole family. And now he was gone, perhaps never to come back; and Maggie's little heart was very sore,

though she said nothing of her grief. Thoughtless she often was, but never where Bessie was concerned; she never forgot her little sister's happiness or comfort, and would bear anything herself, if so she might keep harm or trouble from Bessie. Her father knew this, and why she spoke as if she did not care much about Flossy, and he loved her the better for it, for he saw that it was hard work for her to keep back the tears. He put his arm about her, and kissed her tenderly, as he began to talk of other things.

Quite late that night, when Mrs Bradford went up stairs, she heard a low sobbing from the room opening out of her own, where Maggie and Bessie slept, each in her own pretty little bed.

"What is it, my darling?" she asked, going in. "Is your ear feeling badly again?"

"Not so very, mamma," said Maggie, "but—please put your head down close, mamma, so Bessie won't wake up—I do feel so very, very badly about Flossy. If I knew somebody had him who would be kind to him, I think I could try to bear it, but I know they will hurt him and tease him, and he'll have such a hard time. I know he'll be homesick, too—oh, dear—and I can't go to sleep, 'cause I think so much

about him, and I don't want Bessie to know it."

Mamma sat down on the bed and comforted Maggie, and then, holding her hand, began to tell her a story which she took care not to make too interesting, until presently the little hand which held her own loosened its grasp, and Maggie's regular breathing showed that she had forgotten her trouble.

All this made Mr Bradford resolve that he would spare no pains to recover Flossy, and the next morning he went to the police-station, and asking the name and beat of the man who had brought in his little daughter, went in search of him. He was soon found, and told where he had met Bessie; but he had been able to learn nothing of the lost dog. Mr Bradford inquired all about the neighbourhood in vain; the boys whom he met either could not or would not answer his questions. He offered a reward to whoever could tell anything that would lead to the recovery of the dog, and when he went down town, put an advertisement in the papers saying the same thing.

But three days passed, and still no word came of Flossy. On the fourth morning, the family were all at breakfast, when Patrick, who was

passing through the hall, heard a scratching and whining at the front-door. He hurried to open it, and Flossy rushed in, ran through the hall into the breakfast-room, and before any one had recovered from their first surprise, scrambled into Maggie's lap, buried his face under her arm, and lay trembling and whimpering with joy. Poor little fellow! he was in a sad state. His glossy silken coat was all matted and dirty; he looked thin and half-starved; his pretty red collar, with its brass lettering, was gone, and around his neck the hair was rubbed off, as if it had been worn by a rope, and his mouth was cut and bleeding. Papa said he thought he had been tied up, and in his struggles to free himself had worn the hair from his neck, and cut his mouth with gnawing at the rope.

The children cried and laughed over him by turns, hugged and kissed him, and although it was against mamma's rules to feed him in the dining-room, begged that they might do it for this once. Permission was given, and then they wanted to stuff him with everything that was on the table; but mamma said they must be careful, or he would be ill, so a saucer of warm bread and milk was brought and put on the hearth,

and glad enough the poor puppy was to have it. But he would not eat unless Maggie's hand was on him, and every now and then he would stop to look up in her face with a low whine, as if he wanted to tell her his pitiful story. Afterwards he was well washed, and then, wrapped in his blanket, went to sleep in Maggie's lap. He woke up quite refreshed, but for a day or two did not care to play much, content to lie most of the time in Maggie's or Bessie's arms, or curled up in a ball in some comfortable corner. But after this long rest, and several good meals, to say nothing of a great amount of petting, he began to bark and act like himself, and was once more the bright, merry, affectionate plaything he had been before.

Where he had been, or how he had escaped from those who had treated him so cruelly, was never known, but every one thought it quite wonderful that so young a dog, and one who had been such a short time in the house, could have found his way home alone.

XI.

NEW PLANS.

THINGS went very smoothly and pleasantly after this for several weeks. Maggie finished the whole number of towels, and she had taken so much pains, and they were so well done for a little girl of seven, that mamma said she thought she must give her six cents apiece instead of five. Bessie's small patient fingers were learning to do nicely, too, and Mrs Bradford said she should soon have two neat young seamstresses. There were now more than four dollars in the box. They had each had one new pair of gloves bought for them, and it was not likely, if these were not lost, that more would be wanted before New Year. Maggie had improved surprisingly in the matter of boot-laces, and now did not wear them out much faster than Bessie, who did not put on her own shoes. Growing daily more careful in this one thing, she became so in others. Fewer buttons

and strings were dragged from her clothes, her aprons and dresses were not so soon soiled, and her hat, instead of being tossed down in any spot where she happened to be when she took it off, was always carried to the nursery and given to Jane, that she might put it away.

Very often the children had small presents of money. Grandmamma Duncan or Uncle John, papa or grandpapa, would give them a new five or ten cent piece,—once Uncle John had given them each twenty-five,—but they never spent it for their own pleasure. As soon as they received any such little gift, away they ran for the library-box, and popped the money in. One day Maggie found ten cents in the street, and came rushing in to her mother's room with it.

"See here, mamma," she said, "what I have found! It was lying right down by our door-step, and there was no one near it, and I don't know whose it is."

"Well, if you do not find the owner, we may think you have a right to it, I suppose," said Mrs Bradford.

"But, mamma, ought we not to put it in the paper first, and see if any one comes for it?"

"No, dear, that would not be worth while for such a small sum."

"But, mamma, when papa found that pocket-book with money in it, he put a piece in the paper, so the person who lost it would know where it was."

"There were more than a hundred dollars in that pocket-book, Maggie. It was only right that papa should let the owner know where it was to be found. But ten cents is a very small sum, and if he put half-a-dozen advertisements in the paper, it is not at all likely that any person would come for it."

"And no one came for the money in the pocket-book," said Maggie, "though papa kept it a great while. But, mamma, he said it did not belong to him; and since he could find no owner, he should think it belonged to the Lord. So he gave it to the Sunday School. Well now, if I do not know who lost this ten cents, do you not think it belongs to the Lord, and I ought to return it to Him?"

"Perhaps you ought, my darling," said Mrs Bradford, well pleased to find her little girl so strictly honest, and so unwilling to keep that which she could not quite surely feel was her

own. "Suppose you put it with your library money?"

"Would that be quite fair, mamma? Would it be giving to the Lord that which belonged to Him to put it with that money which we are to earn?"

"Quite fair and right, I think, dearest. That money you have certainly devoted to the Lord's work; and you may put this with it with a clear conscience."

So the ten cents were added to the sum in the box, which, in one way and another, was fast growing to the desired amount.

Each Sunday Maggie and Bessie went over to the hotel to Mrs Rush's class. Not one had they missed, for they counted so much upon it that their mother could not bear to keep them at home, even in bad weather. Two or three Sabbaths had been very rainy, but papa had wrapped Bessie in mamma's waterproof cloak, and carried her over to the hotel, while Maggie, in her own cloak and high India-rubber boots, trotted along by his side holding the large parasol, which made a capital umbrella for the small figure beneath it. Two bright little faces they were which peeped forth from the hoods of these waterproofs when

they appeared in Mrs Rush's parlour, and dearly did she and the colonel love to see them. Then the wrappings were pulled off, and there were the two darlings as warm and dry as if they had never stirred from their own nursery fire.

Mrs Rush still did all the teaching herself; but since that first Sunday, she had quite given up the office of story-teller to her husband. She never could invent such stories as he did, she said, and since he had begun with it, he had better go on! So each Sunday he had one ready for them, and when the lessons were over, teacher and scholars were alike eager to listen. He had to repeat "Benito" more than once, so fond were they all of it; and the children, especially Bessie, would stop him if he told it in any way different from that in which they had first heard it, and tell him he was wrong. They remembered it, he said, better than he did.

Maggie and Bessie were very busy just now. Christmas was drawing near, and they were each working a book-mark which were to be presented to Colonel and Mrs Rush. Bessie's was for "her soldier," and Maggie's for his wife. Aunt Annie had promised to show them how they were to be worked, and one afternoon took them out to buy

the materials. They came home each with a piece of card-board, a skein of silk, and half a yard of ribbon; and no lady who had spent hundreds of dollars that day took half the pleasure in her shopping that our little girls did in theirs.

Aunt Annie had offered to give them what they needed from her stock of pretty things. But no, they must buy all with their own money, or it would not be quite their own presents. As soon as their walking dresses were taken off, Aunt Annie was coaxed to show them at once how the book-marks were to be made. She told them they must first decide what mottoes they would work, and proposed several. Maggie chose, "Remember me;" and Bessie, "I love you, Sir." Annie said it was not the fashion to put "Sir" on a book-mark; but Bessie thought it would not be at all the thing for little girls to give "unpolite presents."

"We ought to make our book-marks just as proper as our own speaking," she insisted.

Maggie was a little doubtful; but at last she said she would do as Bessie did, since it was "better to be too polite than not polite enough."

So Aunt Annie let them have their way, and

greatly to her own amusement, cut the card long enough for "I love you, Sir," and "Remember me, ma'am." They did not think it any the less their own work that their aunt put the points of the needles into the holes where they were to go. Did they not pull them through with their own fingers and draw the silk to its proper place? Of course, it was their own work; Aunt Annie would not have said it was hers on any account. After two or three letters were made, Maggie learned to find the right hole for herself with a good deal of direction.

Before bed-time that night, Maggie had worked "Remem," and Bessie, "I lo;" and they looked at what they had done with great satisfaction. Besides these book-marks, they were each to work one for papa or mamma, so that they had enough to keep them busy until Christmas.

Meanwhile the picture which Aunt Helen was painting was nearly finished. She had never allowed Maggie to see it, which the little girl thought very strange; but she had kept the secret well. Sometimes they went to Riverside, and sometimes Aunt Helen came to grandmamma's house, when they would be sent for; and if mamma was not there, their aunt would paint

very industriously. Bessie wondered why s would not let them see what she was paintir and why Maggie should always be so full of gl at such times, and shake her head so very wisel But after she had been once told that it was secret, she asked no more questions.

On the morning after the book-marks we commenced, Mrs Bradford, who was not ve well, was lying on the sofa, while her lit daughters were playing quietly on the other si of the room, and she heard them talking togeth

"Bessie," said Maggie, "I am so glad that have all my towels done, so I can have leisure make my Christmas presents."

"What does leisure mean?" asked Bessie.

"It means not to be busy."

"Oh, I am glad, too, Maggie! You was ve industrious, and had a great deal of per-se-wer

"Ance," said Maggie.

"Ance what, Maggie?"

"Per-se-ve-rance. That's what you must sa said Maggie.

"No. This morning Fred was mad 'cause couldn't do his sum, and he asked papa to h him, and papa said he must persewere, and could do it himself."

"Yes, I know it," said Maggie; "but it is persevere to do it, and perseverance to have it."

Bessie did not quite understand, but she thought it must be right, since Maggie said so.

"We 'll ask mamma about it when she feels better," said Maggie. "Isn't she good to us, Bessie, to help us so much to get our library?"

"Yes," said Bessie, "she 's such a precious mamma. I do think every one is so kind to us, Maggie."

"Yes," said Maggie, "when I think about my friends, I feel as if I could not say, 'God bless them' enough."

"Yes," said Bessie, thoughtfully; "and when everybody is so good to us, and Our Father is so good to us, and we have such pleasant times, I suppose we ought to be the best children that ever lived."

"But we're not," said Maggie; "least, I'm not. I think you are almost as good as any one that ever lived, Bessie."

"No, I 'm not, Maggie. Sometimes I feel very naughty, and just like being in a passion, and I have to ask Jesus very much to help me."

"It 's a great deal better to feel naughty, and not be naughty, than to feel naughty, and be

naughty, too, Bessie. Anyhow, you're just good enough for me."

"But we ought to be good enough for Jesus," said Bessie. "I wish I was as good as that boy named Nathan Something, that Harry yead to us about on Sunday."

"Oh, yes," said Maggie, "it 's all very well to read about these wonderful children, but when one comes to do it, it's a different thing. I don't believe that any one could be so good as never to do or to think a wrong thing. But, Bessie, you know, I will be quite sorry when mamma don't give us glove-money any more. I think this plan has been of service to me in my carelessness. Don't you think I'm pretty tol'able now?"

"Not pretty," said Bessie; "I think you are very tol'able now. Why, Maggie, don't you know papa said he could trust you to take a message or do an errand now as soon as any of his children?"

"Yes, and it was very nice to hear him say that, Bessie. I didn't mind for all the trouble I took to be careful, when he said it. When we have our glove-money, it will make more than six dollars in our box, if mamma don't have to

spend any of it for us. We only want five for the library, so what shall we do with the rest of it, Bessie? Mamma said we must only spend that money in doing good."

"Perhaps mamma will tell us something," said Bessie.

"But I'd like to think of something ourselves, and I did think of a nice thing, Bessie, if you would like to do it."

"I think I would. Tell me, Maggie."

"Yesterday, when Mary Bent came here, she had on only a thin little cape, that did not keep her warm at all, and she looked so cold, nurse asked her if that was the warmest thing she had, and she said yes. So nurse brought an old piece of flannel, and basted it all inside the cape to make it warmer; but she said the child ought to have a thick cloak or shawl, and if mamma was home, she knew she would do something for her. Mary said her mother had a warm shawl, but when the weather was cold, they had to keep it to put over Jemmy, 'cause he shivered so if he was not covered up warm. I felt so sorry for her, and last night, I thought maybe we could take the rest of our money and buy her a warm thing to wear. Would you like that, dear Bessie?"

"'Deed, I would," said Bessie. "You do make such nice plans, Maggie. If we can do it, I shall just tell Mary you made it up. I don't believe anybody has such a smart Maggie as I have."

Maggie kissed her sister, for dearly as she loved praise, none was sweeter to her than that which Bessie was always so ready to give.

"I'm afraid we won't have enough to buy anything *very* warm," she said, "'cause that would cost a good deal, and we have not time to earn any, we are so very busy."

"Yes," said Bessie, "we have our hands full; but we will ask mamma."

Later in the day they did ask her, and she said that, if they pleased, they might use what they did not need for the library for this purpose.

"But you will not have enough to buy a warm cloak for Mary, such as she should have, my darlings," she said. "Nurse told me how poorly Mary was clothed for this cold weather, and I had intended, the next time I should go out, to buy some gray flannel, and let Jane make a cloak thickly lined and quilted. This will cost more than you can spare."

"Well, mamma," said Bessie, "if you will wait till after Christmas, perhaps we might earn enough to buy a cloak for Mary, and we would like to do it ourselves."

"But in the meanwhile, the poor child would be suffering with the cold," said Mrs Bradford. "Suppose I give Mary the cloak, and you buy for Jemmy a comfortable, so that he will not need his mother's shawl."

The children agreed, though they did not look very well satisfied, for they had set their hearts on giving the warm garment to Mary themselves. Suddenly Maggie looked up at her mother as if a bright thought had come into her mind, and said, eagerly,—

"Mamma, Mary said she used to wear her mother's shawl when Jemmy did not need it. Suppose you were to buy the comfortable, and then the shawl will be at liberty for Mary, and by and by, when we have enough, *we* can buy the cloak."

Mamma said this would do very well, and so it was arranged. Then she told them that if they wished she would continue to give them the glove-money each month, and what they saved from it they might still spend for others who

were in need; for Mrs Bradford agreed with Maggie that this plan had been of service to her little girl, and thought it would be well to keep on with it, since it was teaching her to be thoughtful and careful herself, in order that she might be of use to others; and good habits once formed are not easy to lose.

That evening, when papa came home, he brought some glossy, crisp, new bank-notes, which he offered to Maggie and Bessie in exchange for some of the smaller money in their box. They were quite ready to take them, they were so clean and pretty; and taking out two dollars in change, Mr Bradford put in two one dollar notes.

XII.

A VISITOR.

A DAY or two after this, a lady and gentleman named Moore came to pay a visit to Mr and Mrs Bradford. They brought with them their son George, a boy about Harry's age. What kind of a boy he was may be known from a conversation between Harry and Fred on the first evening of the Moores' visit.

"Harry," said Fred, as they were undressing for bed, "what do you think of that chap?"

"Who—George?" said Harry; "I don't fancy him, though it's scarcely fair to judge yet; but I don't think there's much in him. He's a Miss Nancy-ish sort of a fellow."

"There's not much in him of the right sort," said Fred, savagely; "but there's plenty of another kind; and if he tries it on here, I'll have it out of him."

"Halloa!" said Harry; "what has set you up

that way, Frederick the Great? What would papa say to hear you speaking so of a guest in his house?"

"I don't care," said Fred; "guest or no guest, I am not going to have any fellow playing shabby tricks on our Midget and Bess. It is a man's duty to stand up for his mother and sisters. I tease the girls myself sometimes, I know—more shame for me; but you will allow I haven't done it so much lately, Hal. I couldn't, since Bess told me gemperlums didn't tease;" and Fred began to laugh. "But I never played mean tricks on them, and I sha'n't let any chap that 's nothing to them. He 'd better let them alone, or I 'll settle him, that 's all."

"But what has he done?" asked Harry. "Seeing he is a visitor, you ought not to talk so about him without some special good reason."

"Reason!" repeated Fred, pulling off his jacket, and tossing it upon a distant chair; "there 's special reason enough, if that is all you want, I 'll tell you. The first thing this evening, while the grown-upers were at dinner, and you were studying in the library, he was playing jackstraws with Maggie and Bessie. I thought it did not seem very polite to leave him alone

with the little girls; so, as I had done all my lessons but the copying of my sums, I took my slate to the parlour table. I suppose he thought I was not noticing his play, but I soon found him out. First place, he said they were to throw from the height of their fists,—his being twice as big as either of the girls. Presently he told Bessie that she joggled. I couldn't see that she did, but I said nothing. It was the same thing with Maggie. She had only taken off one or two when he stopped her. Midget was quite sure that she had not shaken, and so was I; but he declared that he had seen it. Pretty soon he gave an awful shake himself; but the girls were looking away, and did not see it. He looked up at them, and seeing they did not notice it, went on playing without a word. The next time he told Bessie she shook; she laid down the hook with a little sigh, and said, in her innocent way, 'We always shake when we don't see; please to 'scuse us, because we don't mean to.' Maggie declared that Bessie had not shaken, and insisted that she should go on; and what do you think the mean fellow did then? He blew upon the jack-straws as Bess went to draw one out; so, of course, they went. 'Then I did

shake,' said Bessie. Of course, he won the game by ever so many. 'It 's very funny we shook so much when we didn't see,' said Midget. 'You should look sharp,' he answered. So, then, I put in. 'It don't do to have more than one too sharp in a game,' I said. He took, and after that did not care to play any more. Now, is he not a mean sneak to trick two little girls?"

"That he is," answered Harry, indignantly; "but still it won't do for you to make a row with him, Fred."

"That 's not all," said Fred. "You know when Maggie spilled that spoonful of ice-cream over herself at dessert, and a little went on Mrs Moore's dress? Well, it was all George's doing. Just as she went to lift it to her lips, he jerked her arm with his elbow, and away went the spoon. Then mamma said, 'Maggie, how could you be so careless, my dear?' and Mrs Moore looked like a thunder-cloud. But he never had the honesty to own up, even when Meg turned and looked at him with great, wide-open eyes, as if she expected him to speak. Papa suspected something, I know, for he called Maggie to him, and made her stay at his side, not a bit as if he thought it was her carelessness. He had better

look out for himself, that 's all; for if he tries much more of that game, he 'll find me pitching into him."

"You won't fight him?" said Harry.

"Yes, I will fight him, too, if he plagues our girls, or cheats them."

"You know what papa thinks of fighting, Fred; and what will he say if you quarrel with a boy who is a guest in our own house?"

"I 'll guest him if he don't mind his p's and q's," said Fred, scrambling into bed in his usual headlong fashion. "I say, Hal, couldn't you give him a hint in the morning that we won't stand such doings? You 're a better hand to do it than I am. You 'll keep your temper, and I sha'n't."

"I 'll see," said Harry, who was desirous to keep the peace between his brother and the visitor, and who knew that Fred's hot temper and contempt for all meanness would be very apt to lead him into trouble with such a boy as he perceived George to be.

"There 's his mother, too," said Fred, "telling mamma that 'she felt it was a great risk to bring him from home, he was such a good boy, so free from all bad habits. She had never

allowed him to play with other children, as she thought they *contaminated each other;* and she was glad he seemed to prefer girls' society.' Bosh! He 'prefers the girls' society' because he can come it over them, and he can't over us. His father has more of the right stuff in him. He said 'it was time George was thrown with other boys, and allowed to take his share of rough and tumble.' But I sha'n't trouble him if he don't provoke me too much; only you tell him we won't stand seeing our sisters ill-treated."

But although Harry did as Fred asked, there was trouble before the day was half over. Mr Moore gave his son permission to go out to the park during the recess of the school which the boys attended. Before the half-hour was up, George rushed into the house crying loudly, and with his lip cut and bleeding. He made such an outcry that the whole family were very much alarmed; but when his mouth was washed, it proved to be but a slight cut, and nurse declared to Jane that Franky would have been ashamed to make a fuss for such a trifle.

"Fred had done it," he said. "Fred wanted to fight, and he would not. He had never

fought in his life. He'd be ashamed to say he had."

Mrs Bradford was very much troubled; but she waited to hear her own son's side of the story before she judged him. Mrs Moore, however, had a great deal to say.

When Fred came home, two hours later, his hand was bound up in his pocket-handkerchief.

"How have you hurt your hand, Fred?" asked his father. "Is it true you have been fighting?"

"Yes, sir."

"Without just cause, as George says?"

"I had cause enough, sir, if that was all," said Fred, rather sulkily for him.

"That he had," said Harry. "You'd have been ready to fight yourself, sir. I'll tell you how it was. George is not fair and above board, as we found out last night. So when he came out to the play-ground, I just told him we would allow no unfair play, and he did not try it. But after a while he said he did not care to play with such a rough set, and walked off by himself. I thought I ought to go and see after him, and found him shying stones at the sparrows about the water-tanks. I told him he had better have

done with that, or he would have an M.P. down on him. Then he said he thought he 'd go home. First thing I knew, a few minutes after, he was howling, and Fred had him by the collar. It seems poor Charlie Wagstaff—poor hump-backed little Charlie—was sitting on a bench reading, when my gentleman George passed by and saw him. He began by throwing gravel over Charley's head and neck, not thinking he was one of our boys, and that not a fellow in the school would see him abused, and at last, getting bolder, snatched his book, and threw it over the park railing. It was a borrowed book, and the poor boy took his crutches and started after it. Then George began dancing about him, and calling him 'Old hipperty hop,' and such names. Fred, who saw them from a distance, feared something was wrong, and ran to the spot, just in time to see him pull Charlie's crutch from under him, throw him on the ground, and then run. But Fred collared him, and, in his quick way, just let fly and hit him in the mouth. He came off the worst though, for his knuckles were cut by George's teeth, and *he* was not so much hurt. George went off roaring, and that moment the whistle sounded, and we had to go in. It was

writing hour, and when Mr Peters saw Fred's bleeding knuckles, he asked him if he had been fighting. He said, 'Yes,' and Mr Peters was going to keep him in, when Charlie spoke up, and told the whole story. Mr Peters said we all knew how strict the rules against fighting in play-hours were; but he really thought, in this case, Fred was almost excusable, and asked how many agreed with him. Up went every hand in the school, and I don't think he was ill-pleased either. So he excused Fred, and told me to tell you why he had done so; and I don't believe you 'll be the one to blame him, papa."

Mr Bradford was certainly not disposed to be severe with his boy, but he talked to him a little on the evils resulting from his hasty temper, and readiness to give a blow when a word would answer.

"I am not inclined to punish or reprove you under the circumstances, my son," he said, "but you have made some discomfort for your mother and me, as well as for yourself, by your hasty conduct. It is not pleasant to feel that a son of ours has so conducted himself to the child of our friends, however great the provocation; and you have forgotten the laws of hospitality in attack-

ing one who is a guest beneath your father's roof."

"I'll go and shake hands with him this minute," said Fred. "I did forget who and what he was, that's true, though I'll own I have been afraid I should serve him out ever since he has been in the house."

And Fred went directly to find George and make peace with him. George was unwilling to shake hands, and Mrs Moore did not look very kindly at Fred, but Mr Moore insisted that his son should make friends and receive Fred's apology. Neither Harry nor Fred told Mr and Mrs Moore of George's misconduct towards Charlie, and he was not honourable enough to tell himself, leaving his parents to suppose it was only Fred's quarrelsome temper that had been to blame.

After this, George kept himself rather apart from the other boys, spending most of his time with Maggie and Bessie, who did not like him much, they could scarcely tell why, but who were very polite to him. Flossy did not like him either, but he showed it very plainly, barking at him whenever he saw him, and if George came near to him scrambling into the children's arms

or running under Mrs Bradford's skirt, where he would keep up a low snarling or woof, wooffing, which was very unmannerly.

Just about this time Mrs Bradford found that one of Maggie's second teeth was making its appearance behind the first tooth, which was not yet loosened to give place to it. She was afraid that the new tooth would appear crooked, and so spoil the look of Maggie's mouth, and she said she thought she must take her to the dentist and have the old one drawn.

Now Maggie had a great horror of the dentist. Unfortunately, she had once been taken there by grandmamma when Aunt Annie was to have a tooth drawn. Maggie had happened to be in the carriage, and, without thinking much about it, Mrs Stanton had allowed her to go in with them. The tooth was a hard one to draw, and poor Aunt Annie fainted, and was very ill, while no one thought of the little frightened child who stood trembling in a corner of the room, thinking that the dentist had killed her dear aunt. Afterwards Aunt Annie took cold in her face, and suffered very much because she foolishly went out too soon; but Maggie thought it all the fault of the poor dentist. After that, when-

ever her dolls were ill, it was always because they had been to the dentist. They had scarlet fever, measles, and broken legs and arms, and were even deaf, dumb, and blind, all through the fault of the dentist. Mrs Bradford was very sorry for this, as she was afraid it would make trouble with Maggie when her teeth should need any attention; and so it proved, for when she told her she thought she must take her to Dr Blake, Maggie turned very white.

"It will not be much, dearest," said her mother. "It is a little first tooth, and the pain will be over in a moment."

"Mamma," said Maggie, "I would rather have my mouth ever so ugly than have it out."

"Perhaps you do not care now, Maggie, but when you are a young lady, you will not thank your mother for allowing your teeth to grow crooked in order that she might spare you a moment's pain now."

Maggie said no more, but for the rest of the day she looked so troubled, and she and Bessie had such anxious whisperings, and there was so much feeling and touching of the tooth that was to be lost, that Mrs Bradford told her husband that she should take her to Dr Blake the first

thing in the morning, that she might have no more time to think about it.

"Maggie," said Mr Bradford, calling her to him just as he was going down town the next morning—"Maggie, do you want to earn a dollar?"

"Oh yes, papa!" and Mr Bradford smiled as he saw the troubled face light up for a moment.

"You and Bessie are going to be great money-makers," he said. "You must not grow too fond of it, or learn to love it for its own sake. If, when I come home this afternoon, you have a little white tooth to show me, I shall pay you a dollar for it."

"And can I do what I like with it, papa?"

"Yes, whatever you please. You may spend it for Christmas presents, or for something for yourself—just which you choose."

But Maggie did not mean to do either. She thanked and kissed her father, and was off to tell her mother and Bessie.

"There's a whole another dollar for Mary's cloak," she said, "now she'll have it all the sooner." And she kept up her courage very well till they drove up to the dentist's door.

Then Mrs Bradford felt the little hand she held squeezing her own very tightly, and Maggie looked up in her face with a quivering lip. "I have to think very much about Mary's cloak not to cry, mamma," she said.

"You are my own dear, courageous little girl," said Mrs Bradford, "and it will soon be over now." She was very sorry for Maggie, for she knew this was a hard trial for her, and wished very much that she could bear it in her place; but since this was not possible, all she could do was to help her to bear it bravely.

Dr Blake was at home and disengaged, and he was so kind and gentle that Maggie was quite ashamed of feeling afraid of him.

"You don't say this little maid has any need of me?" he said.

Mrs Bradford told what was the trouble, and took off Maggie's hat; the dentist lifted her into the chair, and told her to open her mouth. She gave a long sigh and obeyed, holding on tightly to her mother's hand. Dr Blake looked into her mouth for a moment, and then patting her on the head, said to Mrs Bradford,—

"It's all right enough, madam; the first tooth will be loose in a few days, when you may pull it

with a thread, and the second will come quite straight. No need for any pulling of mine."

As soon as Maggie understood the tooth was not to come out, she looked very much delighted, then grave again. "If it is not too much trouble, sir," she said, "will you please to take it out."

"Why, you surely don't want to have it drawn for the fun of it!" said the dentist.

"No, sir; but for another reason." Maggie was too shy to tell what that reason was.

Since there was nothing to be done with the tooth, Mrs Bradford put on Maggie's hat, and the doctor lifted her down from the great chair.

"Mamma," she said, as they left the house, "I shall never make my dolls poorly again because they went to the dentist. Why, I think he is just as nice as other gentlemen, and I felt real sorry I was so afraid of him."

While Mrs Bradford and Maggie were gone, Bessie stood by the parlour window looking very melancholy, and watching for their return. She was very much troubled about her sister, and would not play with George, or listen to the story which Jane offered to tell her, or do anything but think of Maggie. Presently she saw Mr Hall

coming down the street. He stopped at the door, looked up, and nodded, and then came up the steps. Bessie slipped down from her chair, and running to the front door, called to Patrick, who was in the hall, to open it for her. She seized her kind old friend by the hand, and said, "Mr Hall, we have a dreadful misfortune."

Mr Hall was quite alarmed when he saw her sad little face, but when he had asked what the misfortune was, and heard that Maggie had gone to have a tooth drawn, he was very much relieved and rather amused. He took Bessie on his knee, and after she had told him how well Maggie had behaved, talked to her for a few moments, and then, saying that it was about time for her mother and Maggie to be back, left a message for her father, and went away.

Very soon mamma and Maggie came in, the latter, to her sister's surprise and delight, looking very bright; and lo! there was the tooth still in her head.

"But oh, our dollar! Bessie," said Maggie, "I am so sorry!"

"Never mind," said Bessie. "Maybe we can earn it some other way. I'm so glad you didn't be hurt, Maggie dear."

"Where is that tooth I am to pay for?" said Mr Bradford, when he came home that afternoon.

Maggie came to him, and opening her mouth, showed her pretty rice-grain still in its place.

"Halloa!" said papa. "Did your courage fail?"

"Dr Blake wouldn't take it out, papa; not even when I begged him. And now you won't have to pay the dollar."

"I don't know about that," said papa. "I bought the tooth, and I did not say where I should keep it. It is not quite convenient for me to take care of it just at present; perhaps you would not object to giving it lodging in its present place for a time. But it belongs to me, remember; here is the price, and you are to take care that it does not bite threads or crack nuts, or do anything else which might damage it. It is mine now, bought and paid for;" and as papa spoke, he handed Maggie a dollar bill. "You quite deserve it, my little girl. It was no fault of yours that you did not keep your share of the bargain, and since you did all you could, I shall keep mine."

After Maggie had hugged and kissed her father

till he was half stifled,—Bessie, too, doing her share at that business,—they ran for the money-box to put away the new note. She and Bessie were trying to count over their treasure when George came by.

"Whew!" he said. "Where did you get all that? Is it yours? What are you going to do with it?"

"We are going to do a purpose with it?" said Bessie, for neither of the children cared to tell George what that purpose was.

"Oh, to buy goodies and toys is your purpose, I suppose!"

"No," said Bessie. "It is not a foolish purpose like that;" and she said no more.

They let George help them count the money, however, for they could not do it correctly themselves, then put it all back in mamma's drawer. George had followed them, and saw where they placed it.

That evening a parcel was left at the door directed to Maggie, and when it was opened, there were two new books. In one was written, "For a brave little girl who has lost a tooth, from Grandpapa Hall;" in the other, "For the sister of the brave girl."

"Will you lend me one of your new books?" asked George, as Maggie and Bessie were saying "good-night."

"We can't," said Maggie. "We must not keep them, you know, 'cause I did not have my tooth out, and Grandpapa Hall meant it for that. We are going to give them back."

"Pshaw," said George; "he'll never know. I should not think of such a thing as giving them up."

"I don't believe you would," Fred whispered to Harry.

"Why, that would be doing a story," said Bessie, and she drew away from George with a shocked look. "Why, George, I'm afraid your mother don't bring you up in the way you should go."

Fred and Harry laughed, but George was angry, and would not shake hands with Bessie, when, a moment later, she bade him good-night.

But Grandpapa Hall would not take back the books; he said, as papa had done, that they were meant for the brave girl who was willing to have her tooth drawn.

XIII.

THE BANK-NOTE.

FROM the time that George had seen the children's money, he did not cease to think of it, and soon he began to wish for it.

"'Tis a shame," he said to himself; "those two little snips having such a lot of money, and here I have next to none. Father is so awful stingy about giving me money."

This was not true, for Mr Moore would give his son money for any needful purpose; but as George was apt to waste his allowance, he gave him but a small one. George had been envious when he heard how much more Mr Bradford gave his sons, and now when he saw what the little girls had earned, he kept saying to himself that he wished he had half or even quarter of what was in that box. The wish grew stronger and stronger; then came the thought how easily he might get at it some time when there was no one

in Mrs Bradford's room. Then he began prying and watching and looking at the drawer where the money lay, thinking how fine it would be if he could only *wish* the bank notes out of it into his own pocket. Conscience whispered loudly, struggling with the evil spirit which was gaining such a hold upon him, but all in vain, he would not listen; and her voice grew fainter and fainter.

At last he resolved that he *would* have some of that money, come what might, although he had in the meanwhile found out from the boys with what purpose the dear little girls were saving it. And "chance," as he called it, threw a fine opportunity in his way.

"This note is a bad one," said Mrs Moore to her husband, one morning when George was in the room. "It was among those you gave me yesterday, and was refused in a shop where I offered it."

Mr Moore took it from her. "A counterfeit, certainly," he said; "it is unmistakably bad. I wonder I should have been so careless as to take it." Then twisting it up, he tossed it among a heap of waste paper that lay in a little basket, for Mr Moore was rather a careless man. That note

should have been destroyed at once when he knew it was bad.

A terrible thought came into George's mind, and he did not shut it out. He lingered a moment behind his parents, and snatching the false note, thrust it far down in his pocket; then he followed to the breakfast-room. But he could eat nothing; the food lay untouched upon his plate. A guilty, almost *sick* feeling took from him all appetite, made him hate the sight of those happy faces about the table, and think that every look which was turned upon him was full of anger and scorn. Once when Harry accidentally touched him, he clapped his hand over his pocket with a sudden fear that he was about to drag forth the note and expose him; and when tender-hearted little Bessie came to him, saying that, since he had eaten no breakfast, he should have half of her orange, he pushed her rudely from him, and would not take the gift she offered so prettily. His father reproved him sharply for his ill-manners, and his mother said she was sure George was not well, something had been wrong with him for two or three days; he must see the doctor.

Yes, something was wrong, very wrong with

George, but it was not what his anxious mother thought; it was far worse than any sickness of the body; it was the evil of a bad heart, of a guilty purpose, and no doctor could cure him since he would not go to the Great Physician. All the morning he crept about the house, wretched and uneasy, looking miserable enough to give cause for his mother's anxiety. Once or twice his wicked resolution almost gave way, and he half determined to throw away the note and think no more of the money in the box; but again the tempter whispered, drowning the feeble voice of conscience, and giving him many reasons why he should take what he wished for.

That afternoon he was left alone. His mother and Mrs Bradford went out, taking Maggie and Bessie with them, leaving him behind at his own request. The boys were at school; his father and Mr Bradford far away down town; it really seemed as if all had been arranged for him to carry out his purpose.

Rising from the sofa, upon which his mother had left him, he stole softly to the door and peeped out. How still the house was! He went slowly along the hall, watching the turn of the stairs lest a head should suddenly appear

above it, reached Mrs Bradford's door, pushed it open and entered. Now, quick—not a minute to lose. Hark! What is that? Nothing but old nurse crooning softly to her baby in the nursery.

Noiselessly he pulled open the drawer, lifted the box, the secret of which Maggie had showed him, from its corner, took out one of the fresh clean notes, and put in its place the crumpled, worthless bill his father had thrown aside that morning.

Whenever he had felt reproached for the meanness he was guilty of towards the dear little girls who had been so kind to him, he would say to himself that it was not at all likely they would suffer from it; probably the bad note would be paid away with the others; his father had taken it without noticing that it was false, why should not others do so? Even if it should be found out, Mr Bradford would give his children another in the place of it; he was a rich man, a dollar was nothing to him.

He was about to put the box back, when the thought came to him, why take only one? Forgetting in his guilty haste that the loss of a second would make the change of the first more

"He touched the spring, and the box flew open."
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easily discovered, he touched the spring once more, took out another, and then hastily replaced the box.

The deed once done, half his fears seemed to pass away. How easy it had been! No one had seen him, no one heard him; he was going away with his father and mother in two days, and probably no one would find out—the *theft* he would not say to himself—he called it the *loss*.

While Mr Moore was out, he thought that he had been careless in the matter of the false note, and when he came home, looked for it, that he might destroy it. But it was gone, and his wife could tell him nothing of it. He called George, and asked him if he had seen it. George hesitated, and seemed so confused that his father was sure he had it, and asked how he had dared take it, when he knew it to be bad.

"I only took it to play with," stammered George. "I am always playing at shop with Maggie and Bessie, and I thought it would be nice for money."

This was true, as Mr Moore knew, and, more gently, he told his son to give him the note.

"I threw it away," said the wicked boy; "I

thought maybe you would not like me to have it, and I put it in the fire."

"All right then," said Mr Moore, "but why are you so frightened? you have done nothing so very wrong, though it would have been better if you had not touched the note, and I am myself to blame for leaving it where there was any probability that it might be turned to a bad use."

George was only too glad that he had escaped so easily, and had no feelings of sorrow for having deceived his kind, good father.

The rest of that day and the whole of the next passed, and he heard nothing to alarm him. Every one was more kind than usual to him, though he himself was restless and fretful, for all thought he was not well. He kept out of the way of the other children, and spent half his time lounging on the sofa in his mother's room. He would willingly have spent the whole of his time there, but he was tormented with the fear that something might have been discovered, and would go about among the family to make sure that all was safe.

"Mamma," said Maggie, dancing into her mother's room, on the morning of the third day

—"mamma, nurse says this is the tenth of the month."

"Well, Dimple, what of that?"

"Why, mamma, you know that is the day you give us the glove-money, and here are my gloves—the best ones quite, quite good, and the second best are very nice too; Jane mended them yesterday; and here comes Bessie with hers, and they are *very* nice; and I have had only one pair of boot-laces this month, mamma, and so do you not think we have enough for the log-cabin library, and for Mary's cloak too? We want to buy it and give it to her for Christmas, if you will let Jane make it. I think we shall have enough, mamma; don't you think so?"

Certainly her mother's name of "Dimple" was well suited to Maggie just then; for mouth, cheeks, and chin seemed running over with smiles, while her eyes looked as if they would dance out of her head. Nor was Bessie much less eager, as she stood beside her sister, and the four little hands each held up a pair of gloves.

"We will see," said mamma. "Papa is not quite ready to go down stairs; we shall have time to count it up. I think you have over five dollars in your box, and these two"—as she

spoke Mrs Bradford took some money from her purse—"will make over seven. I think we shall manage to buy Mary's cloak out of that."

She sat down upon a low chair, the children standing on each side, and taking the box from the drawer, emptied it into her lap.

"A pair of boot-laces for Maggie and one for Bessie, that leaves two dollars and fifteen cents for this month. Now here is—— Why, what a crumpled note! How came this here?" and Mrs Bradford took up the note which George had vainly endeavoured to smooth out. "I thought all those notes papa gave you were quite clean and fresh."

"So they were, mamma, nice and new and pretty; and, mamma, I am quite sure I did not mess that up so, and— Why, there are only two notes, and we had three! I did not lose any, mamma—I know I did not," said poor Maggie, all in a flutter, lest her mother should think this was some of her old carelessness.

"Do not be frightened, dear," said Mrs Bradford; "no one is going to accuse you, or think you have been careless, unless there is good reason for it. Henry, will you come here for one moment?"

Mr Bradford came from his dressing-room, hair-brush in hand.

"Do you know anything of this note? Have you changed any of the children's money?" asked his wife.

He took the note from her hand.

"This is a counterfeit, and a very poor one too," he said, the moment he looked at it. "Have either of you ever seen it before, children?"

"No, papa," said Maggie. "I know it is not one of our notes. We kept them just as nice as you gave them to us, and one is gone too."

"When did you last have out your money?" asked Mrs Bradford.

"The day we went to the dentist's, mamma. When papa gave me the dollar that evening. I went for the box and put it in, and George counted the money for us, and there were three notes there, all clean and new."

"And we told Harry how much it was, and he put it in his little book," said Bessie; "he always keeps how much we have in his little book, mamma."

"Some one has meddled with it," said Mr Bradford. "The notes I gave the children were all new ones, on the —— Bank."

"Will we never find our own dollars, do you think, papa?" said Maggie, with a very long face.

"Yes, indeed, my darling—at least, you shall have others in their place. This loss must not fall on you after all your efforts."

"I should have locked up the box," said Mrs Bradford. "I wish I had taken your advice, Henry."

Mr Bradford took from his pocket-book two other bank-notes, and gave them to the children.

"I do not wish you to speak of this to any one," he said to them; and they promised to obey.

Then mamma counted up all the money, and it came to seven dollars, sixty-nine cents—five for the library, and the rest for Mary's cloak; for Mrs Bradford said there was quite enough to buy some warm, cheap cloth, and she would let Jane make it at once, that it might be ready. They should go out with her that day, and help choose the cloth.

Mr Bradford carefully put away the counterfeit note, thinking that it might help to find out the guilty person, and when he went down stairs, called Harry and Fred into the library.

"Harry," he said, "how much money was in the children's box when you counted it for them the other day?"

"Five dollars, sixty-nine cents, papa—here it is written down;" and Harry, who was very neat and orderly in all his ways, pulled out his memorandum-book, and read, "M.'s and B.'s box, Dec. 5th, five dollars, sixty-nine cents." This was the sum which should have been in the box, and showed that the money had been taken within the last few days. Mr Bradford told the boys of the loss, for he wished that they should know of it, but he charged them to be silent. Both he and his wife were very uncomfortable. There were one or two new servants in the house, but they had come with good characters, and there was no reason to think they had taken the money. None of them knew where it was kept, or the secret of the box. Only one besides their own children knew that.

XIV.

DISCOVERY.

Mr and Mrs Moore and their son were to leave early the next morning, and as the day passed on, and George heard nothing of the stolen money, he began to think the loss would not be found out till he had gone; and then, he thought, he should be quite safe. He did not dare to spend it now, lest the Bradford children should wonder where the money came from; but when he went home, he could easily do so without discovery. He had been visiting at his uncle's before he came here, and it would be very easy to say he had given it to him. The last time he had been there, his uncle had given him five dollars; but this time, nothing. There were, or there had been, more than five dollars in that box; why had he not taken it all? It was just as easy to say he had received five dollars as two; and when it was missed, it would be thought

some of the servants had taken it, or that it had been lost through some of Maggie's carelessness. He had gone so far in sin now, that he did not hesitate to go deeper and deeper; and determined, if possible, to have the rest of the contents of the box.

That evening it seemed as if "chance," as he called it, was again about to favour him. Mrs Stanton and Miss Annie were there, and after dinner all the ladies and the younger children were gathered in the parlour; while the two boys were at their lessons in the little study-room at the head of the stairs. Mr Moore was out. Mr Bradford had left the room a short time since, saying he, too, must go out for a while, and the servants, George knew, were at their tea. *Now* was his time.

Making some excuse to leave the parlour, he ran up-stairs till he reached the first turning. The door of the study-room stood ajar. Pshaw! The boys would hear him. He peeped in. No one there but Harry, studying after his usual fashion, with his elbows on the table, his head between his hands, and his fingers thrust into his ears to shut out all sound that might take his attention from his book. Fred must have

gone to his own room in the third story. He should hear him if he came down. Headlong, noisy Fred was sure to give notice of his coming.

But he must make haste. There is not a moment to lose. Almost forgetting his caution in his guilty hurry, he ran quickly up the few remaining steps, and along the hall to Mrs Bradford's room. He stole in as he had done once before. The jet of gas in the burner over the dressing-bureau which held the coveted prize was turned down very low, but the bright fire dancing in the grate made the room quite light enough for his guilty purpose.

He opened the drawer and took up the box. How light it was! and there was no rattle of pennies, none of what dear little Maggie had called, in the joy of her heart, "her log-cabin music." He touched the spring, and the box flew open. Empty! He stood for a moment looking into it, then turned it up to the firelight to make sure there was nothing within. As he did so, he heard steps behind him; a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and looking up with a start, he saw Mr Bradford's face sternly bent upon him, while at his elbow he met Fred's clear, honest eves blazing with scorn and indignation.

His own fell to the ground, and there he stood, like the mean, pitiful thing he was, trembling and cowering, the open box still in his hand.

There was a moment's silence, and then Fred broke forth.

"So it *was* you, you rascal! you mean, sneaking, cowardly thief! You are the fellow that robs little girls of their hard-earned money! You —you—you——" Fred's passion was choking him.

"Hush, hush, my son!" said Mr Bradford, sadly; "it is not for you to reproach this unhappy boy. Leave him to me. Go to your play, if you *can* play after what you have seen."

Fred laid both his own hands on that which rested on George's shoulder. "Take your hand from him then, father; he is not fit to be touched by an honest man, by an honourable gentleman! A thief!"

"Go, go, Fred, and do not speak of this till you see me again."

Fred obeyed, as he knew he must when his father spoke in that tone.

"Now," said Mr Bradford sternly to the guity boy, "go in there;" and he pointed to the door of his dressing-room.

Trembling, and fearing he knew not what, but not daring to disobey, George did as he was told. Mr Bradford followed, silently put beyond George's reach everything on which he might lay his hands, locked every drawer and closet, and then turned to leave the room.

George started forward. "What are you going to do?" he stammered.

"Leave you here till your father comes. I cannot deal with you, for, thank God, you are not my child."

"Oh, don't, don't!" said the wretched boy, falling on his knees. "Oh, I did not mean to —I was only looking—he will punish me so— I would not have taken—"

"Hush, hush," said Mr Bradford, "and do not kneel to me. Do not add to your sin by trying to deny it, but think over what you have done; and when your poor father comes, be ready to make confession to him, and to the God against whom you have sinned."

"But don't tell father; he will be so angry; he minds such things so much. He—he never would forgive me."

"And yet the son of such a father could do this terrible thing? I grieve to tell him, George;

rather, far rather, even for my own sake, would I pass over this in silence, and let you go unpunished; but it is a duty I owe to you, as well as to him, not to let you go on unchecked in sin. I see, too, poor boy, that it is the fear of punishment, not of distressing your kind father, which makes you so anxious that I should not tell him. You do not yet see your guilt, unhappy child; you only dread the pain and shame which it has brought upon yourself."

As Mr Bradford ceased speaking, Mr Moore's short, quick step was heard in the hall, and the next moment he rapped upon the door. Fred, going down-stairs, had met him coming in, and was asked where George was. He had answered, "Up stairs;" but he had been so shocked and distressed by what he had seen that Mr Moore had noticed his manner, and asked if anything were wrong with George. Fred would not say what the trouble was, but told Mr Moore where he would find his son.

Mr Bradford opened the door.

"Fred told me that George was here," said Mr Moore, looking much disturbed. "What is wrong?" he asked, as he saw his son's guilty, miserable face.

"Will you tell your father, George, or shall I?" asked Mr Bradford.

But George only cried and sobbed, saying, "he did not mean to—it was very hard—he was only looking"—till Mr Moore once more asked Mr Bradford to explain what all this meant.

Mr Bradford told the story in as few words as possible,—how his little daughters had shown George the secret of the box, telling him why they were laying by the money; how that morning two of the notes had been missed, and the false one found in their place (as he spoke, taking the bill from his pocket-book and handing it to Mr Moore); how Mrs Bradford had put the rest of the money in a safer place; and lastly, how he and Fred had just seen George go to the drawer and take out the box, as if with the intention of adding to his sin by a new theft.

It was a hard thing for Mr Bradford to do; he knew how he should feel himself if one of his own boys had done this. He was very much grieved for his friend, and when he had told all as gently as possible, he went away, and left him alone with his unhappy son. What passed between them it is not necessary to tell you. George would have denied his guilt even now, but the

false note in his father's hand made this impossible.

Maggie and Bessie did not see him again, for Mr and Mrs Moore left the next morning at an hour even earlier than they had intended; for after this terrible sorrow had come upon them, they felt that they could not bear to meet any of Mr Bradford's children again.

Perhaps you may like to know how Fred and his father discovered George's guilt. It so happened that Fred's quick temper had brought him into more trouble at school, and he did not know exactly how to act in the matter. He had finished his lessons, and was thinking this over when he heard his father come up-stairs and go to his dressing-room.

"I've a great mind to tell papa, and see what he says of it," he said to himself. To think and to do were with Fred one and the same thing; and the next moment he was with his father, asking if he would wait and hear his story. He might have been sure of that; Mr Bradford always had time to spare if his children needed his help or advice.

Fred told his story, and they were sitting talking it over in low tones when George's step was

heard in the next room. The dressing-room was quite in the shade, and though George neither saw nor heard those who were within, he himself was plainly seen through the open door, at his guilty work.

And now, like our Maggie and Bessie, we need have no more to do with this poor boy, and will take leave of him. The little girls were not told that the thief had been discovered. Their mother thought it would only shock and distress them, while it could serve no good purpose for them to know it. They wondered, and talked of it between themselves for a few days; and then there were so many pleasanter things to think of that they forgot all about it.

XV.

THE SNOW.

THESE were indeed pleasant times, and very happy children were our Maggie and Bessie. The only trouble was that night would come, and put an end to first one and then another of these delightful days, and that, as Maggie said, they had to stop enjoying themselves "just to go to sleep."

"I wish the sun always shone in this country," she said, "and that night never, never came."

"What would the little children on the other side of the world say to that?" said papa. "If you had the ruling of day and night, and kept the sun all the time on one side, how do you think they would like to have it always night?"

"Oh! I did not think about that," said Maggie. "I suppose it would be very selfish. I think I had better wish for two suns, one on our side, and one on theirs."

"Or, better still, rest satisfied that our heavenly Father has ordered all things, night and day, sun, moon, and stars, as is best for His own glory and the happiness and comfort of all His creatures," said Mr Bradford. "I think even my wide-awake Maggie would tire of the light of the sun if it should shine for the twenty-four hours, day after day, and the quiet, blessed night never come, when we might close our tired eyes, and take the rest we need."

"Could we not sleep in the day-time if we were tired, papa?"

"We might sleep, but not as well or as pleasantly as we now do when all is dark and quiet."

"Then if I was to wish for two suns, I'd better wish we should never be tired or sleepy."

"So you might go on wishing for ever, and if you had the power, changing first one and then another of the wise laws which our Father in heaven has made for the good of all. And what distress and confusion this would make! What a miserable, unhappy world this would be if you, or some other weak, human creature who cannot see the end from the beginning, and cannot tell what would be the consequence of his wishes,

were allowed such power. No, we may thank God, not only that He does what is best for us, but also that He has allowed none but Himself to be the judge of this."

"So I had better be contented to have the night as it is, papa; is that what you mean? Perhaps other people would not like to have things as I did, and they might think I was a very disagreeable child to have them my way; and I should not like that at all."

"I would not be glad if there was never any night," said Bessie, who was always more ready than her sister to go to rest.

"Then I wont wish it," said Maggie; "and I shall just always try to think 'our Father' knows best, even if I don't feel quite suited myself."

One afternoon, about dark, it began to snow, much to the children's delight; for grandmamma had promised a sleigh-ride whenever it should be possible. All night the soft, feathery flakes fell gently and steadily, so that in the morning the ground was covered thickly with a beautiful white mantle.

Since the weather had become cold, each day, after breakfast, Maggie and Bessie were allowed

to throw out crumbs for the robins and sparrows who came about the house to find something to eat. The birds seemed to know the hour almost as well as the children, and seldom came for their breakfast before the right time. But on this morning the little girls were scarcely down stairs, when their brother called them to come and see what a flock of their pets had already gathered on the piazza and window-ledge. For the ground being all covered with snow, there were no stray crumbs or seeds to be found; and the robins and sparrows being early risers, found themselves hungry, and in need of their regular breakfast rather sooner than usual; and now the prints of their tiny feet were to be seen all over the snow, while twice the ordinary number of birds hopped about the piazza, or perched upon the railing and window-ledge, chirping away, twitching their little heads from side to side, and watching the children, with their bright twinkling eyes, as if asking what made them so late.

Away ran Maggie to ask Patrick for a piece of bread, and came back with a rush and a jump and a sudden shove at the window, which put every mother's bird of them to flight. In her

hurry to feed them, she quite forgot that they were so easily startled, and was much distressed when she saw them all flying off in a great fright.

However, the bread was crumbled and thrown out; and by the time prayers were over, the whole flock were back again, pecking away with much satisfaction, and twittering and chirping as if they were telling each other what very kind people lived in this house, and how thankful they should be for such good friends. At least, this was what Maggie told Franky they meant, as he watched them with his chubby face pressed close against the window pane.

"No shoes and stottins," said he. "Poor birdies! Dere foots too told. Mamma buy shoe for birdies."

His little sisters thought this very sweet and funny in Franky, and they hugged and kissed him till he thought he had said something very fine, and kept repeating it over and over again.

Very soon it stopped snowing, and the sun came out. Then Maggie and Bessie were much amused in watching the people clearing the snow from the pavement, and the boys snow-balling one another. Presently Mrs Bradford missed

Franky from the room. As she had the baby, she could not go after him, but sent Maggie.

She ran from room to room, but could not find her little brother. When she opened the nursery door, and put in her head, she rather wondered to see the bureau-drawers open, and several things lying scattered over the floor; but she did not think much about it, for there was no one there, and she must find Franky. As she went down stairs again, she saw the back-door was standing open, and went to shut it. Here she met Franky coming in with very rosy cheeks, and his face all smiles, as if he were well pleased with himself.

"Oh, Franky!" said Maggie, "what made you go out in the cold with no hat and coat? Didn't you hear me calling you?"

"Yes," said Franky.

"Then why didn't you come?"

"Me too busy," said the little boy; and away he ran into the parlour, while Maggie went to shut the door. To her great surprise she saw the piazza strewn with shoes and stockings,—her own, Bessie's, and Franky's, and even a pair or two of baby's little worsted socks. She came in, and followed Franky.

"Franky," said Mrs Bradford, "did you not hear mamma calling?"

"Yes, ma," said he again, "but me too busy."

"But you must always come at once when mamma calls. What were you doing?"

"Me dave de birdies shoes and stottins," said Franky; "dere foots too told."

Then Maggie told her mother what Franky had done, and nurse coming in just then, Mrs Bradford sent her to see. Sure enough the little rogue had gone up stairs, and filling his skirt with his own and his sisters' shoes and stockings, had scattered them upon the piazza, thinking that the birds could make use of them. Maggie and Bessie thought this a most capital joke, and even nurse, who was much displeased, could not help smiling as she heard their merry peals of laughter. Mamma did not scold Franky, for she did not think he meant to do anything naughty, but she told him he must never do so again, and that the birds did not need shoes and stockings to keep their feet warm.

"But, mamma," said Maggie, "how is it the birds do not have their feet frozen in the snow and the cold? If we were to go hopping about

with bare feet, it would hurt very much, and we would be ill; but the sparrows do not mind it at all."

"Because God has fitted them, dear, as He has all His creatures, for the life which He means them to lead. He has given to the sparrows and robins, not soft, tender feet like yours, but horny claws on which they can hop over the snow and gravel without feeling the cold, or being hurt. See by this how He has cared for all He has made; the smallest or weakest bird or animal is known and watched over by His all-seeing eye. When our Saviour was on earth, He chose these little birds to teach us a most precious lesson. Once when He was talking to His disciples, after telling them that they were to fear God, and not man, He wished to show them how constant and watchful was God's care of His people, and He said, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.' A Roman farthing was less than a cent and a half, so that one of these sparrows cost less than a penny, and this was meant to

teach us, that if each of these little birds which was worth so small a sum, is known and remembered by the Almighty; if not one of them can fall and die unless He sees it, how great must be His care and love for us, whom He has called 'of more value than many sparrows,' and for whom He gave His only Son to die upon the cross. It is a very sweet and comforting thought to know that He never forgets us, and that no harm can come near us, unless He knows and permits it."

"And it ought to make us think that He sees what we are doing, and knows if we are even a little bit naughty. Ought it not, mamma?" said Bessie.

"Yes, darling, and it should make us very careful not to grieve or displease Him by even a wicked thought or angry feeling."

"'Cause when He sees it, He thinks we are ungrateful about His Jesus," said the thoughtful little Bessie.

This was Saturday, and a holiday, when the children had no lessons, and the boys did not go to school; and about twelve o'clock Harry and Fred came in with Tom Norris, Walter Stone, and Johnny Ransom; they were all four going

into the yard to build a snow-man, and Harry begged that his sisters might go too, saying that he and Fred would take care of them. Mamma had no doubt of this, and she said Maggie might go, but she was afraid to have Bessie play in the snow, lest she should take cold. Maggie said she would not go if her sister might not; but Bessie told her to go, and she would stand at the library-window, and watch them at their work. Maggie still hesitated; but her mother said she would see that her sister did not feel lonely while she was gone; and having been well wrapped up, she at last went with the boys.

To say that Bessie was not disappointed, and did not very much wish that she, too, might have a share in the delightful play, would not be true. But though a tear came into her eye as she saw the others run off, she bore it bravely.

"Mamma, you would be sure to let me go if you thought it best, wouldn't you?" she asked, lifting her face to her mother to be kissed.

"Indeed I would, my sweet child; you may be certain mamma would never take from you any pleasure she thought safe for you; but it would be wrong and foolish in me to let you go when you would probably take cold and be ill.

And now, what shall we do to amuse ourselves? If you like to stand by the window and see the boys, I will bring my work and tell you a story, or we will sit by the fire, and I will read to you."

Bessie chose the first; for she said that would be two pleasures at one time.

When Mrs Bradford came back with her work-basket, Bessie was standing on a chair by the window, and she turned to her mother with a very bright face.

"Mamma," she said, "come and see what a nice time Maggie is having. I think I am almost glad you didn't let me go, 'cause if I was playing myself, I could not see how much she 'joys herself. Just hear her laugh!" and Bessie laughed merrily herself.

Mamma stooped and kissed her sweet-tempered, generous little daughter, who, instead of fretting and making herself and others miserable because she could not do as she wished, not only contented herself with the pleasures which were left to her, but really tried to find comfort in her very disappointment.

Maggie did indeed seem to be enjoying herself. The boys had begun their snow-man; but

she found that rather hard work, and, having asked leave, was snow-balling her playfellows with all her might. She was not very apt to hit them; for her small hands could not take very sure aim in her thick worsted mittens; but whenever she missed her mark, she became only more eager, and, hit or miss, her gleeful laugh rang out all the same. Mrs Bradford found that no story was needed; so engaged was Bessie in watching the frolicsome antics of her sister, that she had no thought of anything else. In the height of her play, Maggie did not forget, every few moments, to stop and kiss her hand, and nod and smile at the two dear faces in the library-window. When her mother thought she had been out long enough she called her in, and she came, all glowing and rosy with her play in the fresh, cold air.

"Tom says the sleighing is splendid. I hope grandmamma won't forget us."

"No fear of that," said mamma; and she had scarcely spoken when Aunt Annie's smiling face appeared at the door.

"Well, little polar bear, where did you come from?" she asked, taking hold of the bundle of furs and wrappings which called itself Maggie.

"Out of the icebergs to eat you up," growled Maggie, pretending to be the bear Aunt Annie had called her.

"Very well, sir, I suppose you have a good appetite since you have come so far; but, of course, if I am eaten up, you cannot expect my mother to go sleigh-riding with the fellow that has made a meal upon her child."

When Maggie heard this, she declared that she was no longer a polar bear, but just Aunt Annie's own little niece, who would not eat her up even if she were starving, and whom it was quite safe to take sleigh-riding. Both she and Bessie were wild with delight. They could scarcely eat their dinner, and the moment it was over, ran away to the nursery to be dressed for the ride.

When the sleigh came to the door, Aunt Annie said she had two polar bears to ride with her, and pretended to be quite alarmed. But both the bears proved to be very well-behaved, and neither bit nor scratched; although they did now and then hug a little as they sat, the one between mamma and grandmamma, and the other between Aunt Annie and Aunt Helen; for Aunt Helen had come from Riverside to pay

her mother a visit, and to stay till after Christmas.

"We are to have a Christmas-tree, Aunt Helen," said Maggie.

"And all our people are to come," said Bessie.

"We have a great deal to do yet," said Maggie. "There are a great many presents to buy, and Christmas will be here one week from yesterday; mamma said so. Aunt Annie, you said you would take us shopping for those things mamma is not to know about."

"Very well," said Aunt Annie, laughing. "I suppose I may as well give up Monday to it, if your mother will let you go."

Mamma was quite willing it should be so, if the weather were fine. The things which she was not to know about were her own and papa's Christmas presents. The book-marks were all worked. Those for Colonel and Mrs Rush were quite finished and laid away; but the two which were intended for papa and mamma still wanted the ribbon, and this was one of the things to be bought. Then Maggie was to buy some trifle for papa, and Bessie one for mamma. They were not trifles to them, however, but very great and important purchases, and there was a great

deal of whispering and hiding in corners. It was rather a singular circumstance, but one which was very convenient, that mamma never asked what they were doing, or even seemed to see that they were engaged with some work in which she was not asked to help.

They had a lovely drive. All the sleighs and cutters in the city seemed to have turned out for the first fine sleighing; and the air was full of the jingling of the merry bells, and the shouts and laughter of the boys as they pelted each other with snow-balls, or went skimming along on their sleds. The Central Park looked beautiful in its pure white dress, which lay so smoothly, just as it had fallen from the hand of the kind Father above; and Maggie said the trees and bushes thought white feathers were becoming, and so had dressed themselves out as if they were going to a Christmas party.

XVI.

SHOPPING FOR CHRISTMAS.

On Monday afternoon, Aunt Annie came for the children, according to promise, and Aunt Helen was with her.

"For I have a little business with Maggie," said Mrs Duncan; "but no one else is to know what it is, so mamma and Bessie are to ask no questions."

This was delightfully mysterious.

"Nobody is to ask questions at Christmas-time," said Bessie, gravely. "Mamma made that yule."

"And it is a wise one too," said Aunt Helen.

"How long do you suppose our Meg can keep a secret, Aunt Helen?" asked Fred.

"I know she has kept one for three months so well, that I am going to trust her with a second."

"Pretty good for Midget," said Fred.

It was indeed a triumph for heedless Maggie. So carefully had she kept the secret of the picture, not even saying, "I know something," or "Something is going to happen," that mamma suspected nothing; and though Bessie knew there *was* a secret, she had not the least idea what it might be.

Aunt Helen started first with Maggie, telling her sister Annie and Bessie to meet them in a certain bookshop.

"Now, Maggie," she said when they were in the street, "I am going to reward you for keeping our secret, by letting you choose the frame for the picture."

The little girl was delighted; but when they reached the shop, and she saw frames of all kinds and sizes, she became confused, and could not tell which to decide upon.

"That one is too large," said Mrs Duncan, as Maggie pointed out one she thought she should like. "No, dear, that is too small again. There," and her aunt laid four or five of the proper size in front of the child; "any of those will do; suppose you choose one from among them."

So, after some more hesitation, Maggie chose a dark walnut frame, with silver nails; and Aunt

Helen said she had shown very good taste. Then Mrs Duncan gave the man directions about the picture, which she had sent to him in the morning. He bowed, and wrote them down, and then said, looking at the rosy, happy face which was peeping at him over the counter, "'Tis a capital likeness, too, ma'am; never saw a better."

"Aunt Helen," said Maggie, as they left the store, "did that man mean he knew our Bessie, and thought you made a good picture of her?"

"I thought you were to ask no questions at Christmas-time," said Mrs Duncan.

"Oh!" said Maggie. "I did not know I must not ask about things like that. I thought mamma meant bundles and work, and such things."

Aunt Helen only laughed, and began to talk of something else; and presently they came to the bookshop, where Annie and Bessie were waiting for them.

At the lower end of this shop was a large table, and upon it were a number of beautiful and useful things intended for presents. There were writing-cases and work-boxes, paper-cutters and weights, beautiful pictures and all kinds of knick-knacks.

"Aunt Helen," said Maggie, eagerly, "do you not think we could find something on that table that would make nice presents for papa and mamma?"

"I do not doubt it," said Mrs Duncan, "if you could pay for them; but I fear, dear Maggie, all those pretty things are much too expensive for you to buy."

"Well," said the little girl, with a sigh, "I suppose we may look at them while you and Aunt Annie buy your books; may we not?"

"If I thought I could trust you not to touch anything, you might. But some of those things are very costly, and you might do much mischief if you meddled with them."

"Aunt Helen," said Bessie, looking up with a very sober face, "we never meddle when we go shopping. Mamma has taught us that, and genyally we yemember what she tells us."

"I believe you do," said Mrs Duncan, smiling. "Well, then, I will trust you;" and she and her sister walked to the other end of the shop to look at some books, leaving the children to amuse themselves.

A gentleman was sitting near the table reading a newspaper, and when Bessie had spoken

out so solemnly, he had looked up, with a twinkle in his eye. The little girls did not notice him, however, nor did he seem to be paying attention to them. They walked round and round, now peeping at this thing, now at that, but never offering to lay a finger upon one.

"Oh," said Maggie, "I do wish, I do wish we could buy some of these beautiful things for papa and mamma! But I suppose we'll have to wait till we're quite grown up, and then perhaps they will all be gone. Just see this paper-weight, Bessie. Would it not be nice for papa? But I think it costs a great deal, and I can only afford twenty cents."

"And see this lovely little picture, Maggie. Mamma would like it so, I know. See, it has the cross, and a pretty vine all around it, and some words. Can you yead it?"

"S-i-m—sim," spelt Maggie, "p-l-y—ply, simply—to—thy—cross—— Oh, it must be 'Simply to Thy cross I cling!'"

"Yes," said Bessie, "it's out of 'Yock of Ages,' and mamma loves that hymn so much. Oh, I do want it for her! Do you think twenty cents will buy it, Maggie?"

"I think not; but we'll ask. I'd like to be

grown up for two things, so I'd never have to go to bed till I chose, and so I could have plenty of money to give everybody everything they wanted. Just see that picture of a dog, Bessie. Does it not look like our Flossy? I wish it was nearer, so we could see it better."

"I can't see it at all," said Bessie, raising herself on tiptoe, to gain a view of the picture which was in the centre of the table. "I wish it was nearer, but we must not touch."

"I'd like to see him better, too," said Maggie. "I want to know if he really is like Flossy, or if he just looks so 'cause he is so far off; I know I wouldn't break it either if I moved it; but then —we promised."

"And mamma said we were *never* to touch without permission," said Bessie; "and we're trusted."

They both stood for some minutes, Maggie looking wishfully at the dog, Bessie still stretching up her neck in a vain attempt to see him, when Maggie suddenly said, "Bessie, mamma said it was not right to put ourselves in the way of temptation, and I think I am doing it. This was just the way I did the day I meddled with papa's inkstand. I stood looking at it, and look-

ing at it, and wishing I had it, till at last I touched it, and did such a lot of mischief. I shan't look at the dog any more, and let's go to the other side, and we won't think about it."

As they turned to do as Maggie proposed, they saw a miserable-looking face peeping in at the glass door. It was that of a boy about eight years old, poor, and in rags, his features all pinched with cold and hunger. He was gazing wistfully at the pretty things and the comfortably-dressed people who were within, and perhaps wishing that Christmas brought such happiness to him. As one after another passed in and out, he held up his thin hand and asked for help, but few heeded him.

"See that poor boy," said Bessie; "I don't believe he has any money to buy Christmas presents."

"I'm afraid not," said Maggie; "I fear he has not enough to buy bread and fire; he looks so cold and thin, and what dreadful old clothes he has!"

"Poor fellow!" said Bessie, in a pitying voice. "I s'pose he would like some money very much. Do you think we could spare him a little of ours, Maggie?"

"If we do, we can't spend so much for our presents," answered Maggie, pulling out her purse from her muff and looking doubtfully at it.

"Do you think papa and mamma would mind it, Maggie, if we each gave the boy five cents, and did not spend quite twenty for them?"

"I don't like to take it off papa's and mamma's presents," said Maggie. "They are so very good to us, I want to give them all we can; but Bessie, I'll tell you. You know I was going to spend ten cents for you, and you ten cents for me. Now we might only spend five cents for each other, and then we can each give five to the boy. I don't mind, if you don't, Bessie."

"No, Maggie, I'd yather give it to him, and then maybe he'll look a little glad."

So each taking five cents from her purse, they ran to the door and put the money into the poor boy's hand, who did indeed look "a little glad" as he received it.

When they came back to the table, the picture of the dog stood just in front, where not only Maggie but Bessie also, could see it quite plainly.

"I hope nobody will think we meddled with that picture," said Bessie.

"No one shall think so," said the gentleman, who had been sitting near, as he rose and threw down his paper. "I moved it myself."

"Then, if you please, sir," said Bessie, "will you tell the shop people you did it? I s'pose they wouldn't think you were naughty, 'cause you're big; but we are forbidden to touch, and we were trusted."

"And I see you are fit to be trusted," said the gentleman, smiling; "and I have a right to touch what I please here, for the shop and all the things in it belong to me. Is there nothing upon the table which you would like to buy?"

"Yes, sir," said Bessie, while Maggie was hanging her head in a terrible fit of shyness at being talked to by this stranger, "if we could afford it; but we think all these things cost too much. We have not a very great deal of money."

"Let me hear what you would like to have, and I can tell you the price," said the gentleman.

"How much is that paper-weight?" asked Bessie.

"Fifteen cents."

Bessie's eyes sparkled, and Maggie looked up in great surprise.

"And this cross, sir, how much is that?" said Bessie.

"That, also, is fifteen cents."

"Then we'll take them both for papa and mamma. I think you are a very cheap gentleman, sir. We thought they would be too 'spensive for us to buy," said the little girl. "Mamma will be very pleased with this lovely picture."

"I hope so," said the gentleman. "Such a good mamma as you have deserves to have a present that will please her."

"Do you know my mamma, sir?" asked Bessie, as she handed him the price of her picture.

"No, but I am sure your mamma is a lady and a good woman, although I do not know her, and I am sure, also, that she has taught you well, and that you have paid heed to her lessons."

Bessie was herself quite certain of all this, but she wondered how the gentleman could know it when he was a stranger to her mother. Perhaps you and I may be able to guess.

"And papa deserves a nice present, too," she said; "he is an excellent gentleman."

"I have not a doubt of it," said her new friend. "And now I suppose you would like to have your purchases wrapped up, so that your papa and mamma may not see them before the proper time."

"We would like to show them to our aunt first," said Bessie; and she and Maggie scampered off with their treasures.

But when Aunt Ellen saw them, she said there must be some mistake. "Those things are worth much more than you have paid for them, my darlings, you have misunderstood; or some one has been joking with you."

"Indeed, indeed, Aunt Ellen, we did not make a mistake, and the gentleman was quite sober," said Maggie.

"Who sold them to you?" asked Mrs Duncan.

Bessie pointed out the person, and Mrs Duncan went to speak to him. Her little nieces looked after her with anxious eyes, fearing lest they might have made some mistake, and that their new treasures would be taken from them, and Bessie ran up just in time to hear the gentleman say, with a laugh, "Surely, I may put what price I please upon the articles I have for sale."

Mrs Duncan laughed too, and said, "Yes, certainly, but—"

"I assure you, I have been amply paid, madam," said the gentleman, "and I beg you will consider the matter settled. It is all right, little one," laying his hand on Bessie's head as she looked up at him; "you have made no mistake;" and then taking the paper-weight and picture, he wrapped them in paper and returned them to the children.

From this shop they went to another, where they were a long time choosing the ribbon for their book-marks, while Aunt Helen and Annie waited with wonderful patience till they had decided this important question. Here, also, a pincushion was bought for nurse, and an emery-bag for Jane. Then Maggie, coming back from a show-case, about which she had been spying, begged Aunt Annie to go to the other end of the shop, and on no account to turn her head. Aunt Helen was taken to the case, and a box was pointed out which Maggie thought would be the very thing for a ribbon-box.

"But you cannot buy that, dear," said Mrs Duncan; "it is too expensive."

"Oh, no, Aunt Helen! it is marked five cents,—just see," said Maggie.

"My poor pet, that is five dollars, not five cents."

This was a great disappointment, for Maggie had quite set her heart on the box; but, of course, she and Bessie could not give five dollars, since they had not the half of that to spend.

"It's really mean," she said angrily, "to go and cheat children so, and make them think it's five cents when it's five dollars."

"Do not speak so, dear," said her aunt; "'cheat' is not a pretty word for you to use, and those numbers mean five dollars very plainly to any one who can read them. Ask papa to teach you about that to-night."

"Let's go back and buy all our presents of that gentleman," said Maggie. "He knows how to keep shop a great deal better than these people."

"Better for your purses than for his own, I think," said Mrs Duncan, laughing. "No, dear, we have bought enough there for this time. We will find something else for Aunt Annie."

"Maggie, Maggie," called Bessie, "come and look at the cunningest glass animals you ever saw in your life."

Maggie's displeasure was quite forgotten as

she saw the pretty toys, and as she and Bessie were looking at them, Aunt Annie joined them.

"What a beautiful glass cat!" she said. "I wish Santa Claus would have one like it on the Christmas-tree for me. I should put it on my what-not, and I do not believe that a mouse would dare to show so much as the tip of his tail in my room, if I had this pussy to guard me."

"Oh, Aunt Annie," said Maggie; "just as if a mouse would be afraid of such a mite of a glass kitty! He would know it could not hurt him."

"Well," said Annie, "if you see Santa Claus, just tell him I would like to have it."

Maggie turned and looked at Bessie with a shake of her head, and eyes which very plainly asked the question, "Shall we buy it for her?" and Bessie answered with a nod which said quite as plainly, "By all means."

So they begged Aunt Annie to walk away once more, a request which she had quite expected, and she went off laughing. Bessie asked the price of the cat, and was told, "six cents," so there was no difficulty about that, and pussy was bought. Then, after some whispering, Mrs Duncan was sent after Annie, and a glass deer

was bought for her what-not. The woman who served the children brought a small box, and putting some cotton in it, laid the deer and the cat upon it, and gave the box into Maggie's hand, saying that she could carry them safely in this way. Maggie told Bessie that the woman knew how to keep shop pretty well, after all.

One or two more small purchases were made, and then they went home. They went shopping several times with mamma or their aunts before all their presents were bought; but two days before Christmas everything was ready,—the book-marks with, "To my dear Father," and "To my dear Mother," as well as those for Colonel and Mrs Rush, a watchman's rattle for noisy Fred, and for Harry, since he was fond of birds, a yellow wooden canary in a pewter cage. It would take too long to name each article, and the person for whom it was intended; but not one of the family, or of their intimate friends, was forgotten. Papa and mamma, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncle, and cousins, grandmamma and the two grandpapas, Colonel and Mrs Rush, Jemmy and Mary Bent, and even each servant in the house, were remembered and provided for; and the older people were quite astonished to

see how much the children had done with the two dollars and sixty cents with which they had started.

And now began the grand preparations for the important day. The Christmas-tree in its square green box came home, and was carried into the library, where the children were now forbidden to go. The "grown-upers," as Fred called them, were passing in and out all the time, going in laden with parcels of all shapes and sizes, and coming out empty-handed. But if the older people had their secrets, the children, also, had theirs, not the least of which was one in which the four eldest were engaged, and which was carried on for a while in the boys' room.

The tree was not to be displayed until the evening of Christmas-day, when there was to be a large family dinner at Mr Bradford's, to which Colonel and Mrs Rush were invited.

XVII.

CHRISTMAS.

"WHO is going to hang up a stocking to-night?" asked Fred, as the children watched their father and uncle while they dressed the room with evergreens on Christmas-eve.

"I shall," said Harry.

"And I," said Maggie.

"I don't know about it," said Bessie; "maybe Santa Claus will think we are greedy, if we hang up our stockings when we are going to have a Christmas-tree."

"No, pet," said Harry; "he's a generous old fellow, and, besides, he'll know that we don't expect much in our stockings. We'll leave a little note, telling him we only do it for the fun of the thing."

"He'll scorch his old legs coming down the chimney to-night," laughed Fred; "there's a roaring big fire in mamma's grate."

"Oh, he 's used to it," said Harry; "he minds neither heat nor cold."

"Maggie," said Fred, "if you hear a scrambling and pawing in mamma's chimney to-night, you can jump up and take a look at him through the crack of the door."

"We wouldn 't be so mean," answered Maggie. "If he meant us to see him, he would come in the day-time when we are up; and if he knew we did it, perhaps he 'd just go whisking up the chimney, and not leave us a single thing."

"Hurrah for honest Maggie!" said Fred. "I hope Santa Claus is around somewhere, and heard you say that. He 'll give you a reward for it."

"Children," said Bessie, "you talk as if Santa Claus yeally was.

"You don't mean to say he really is not!" said Fred. "Now, if he has heard you, Bess, he'll be affronted, and punish you, as he will reward Midget."

"I know who Santa Claus is," said Bessie, gravely, "and I wonder if it 's yight to talk so earnest about him."

"Mamma said it was not wrong," said Maggie, "'cause every one knew it was only a joke, and

no one meant to deceive; but it's fun to think about him and talk about him, so I am going to do it."

"I wonder how this notion of Santa Claus ever came about?" said Harry. "Let us ask papa."

But Mr Bradford was too busy just then to attend to them, and said he would tell them at another time.

When Maggie and Bessie went up-stairs, their brothers went with them to assist in hanging up the stockings, and when nurse found what they were doing, she came too, bringing Franky's stocking and a tiny worsted sock.

"Holloa," said Fred, "you are not going to hang up that apology for a stocking, nursey? Why, Santa Claus will never see it! and if he did, he'll have nothing small enough in his pack to put in it."

"I'll trust to his forgetting my pet," said the old woman. "If he overlooks any one, it will be the one of the family that's always in mischief and up to some saucy prank; and maybe he'll just put a rod in that one's stocking."

"Poor mammy!" said Fred, "do you really think Santa Claus will serve you such a shabby

trick as that, and not bring you a single thing? If he does, I'll save all my pocket-money for a month, and buy you something nice."

Nursey shook her head at the roguish fellow, whom she dearly loved in spite of all his mischief and teasing, and having fastened up the little sock, she carried Maggie and Bessie away to undress them.

If the little girls had been awake an hour later, when their brothers stopped in mamma's room on their way up to bed, they might have said that Santa Claus had a great deal of laughing and whispering to do; but they were sound asleep, and heard nothing till the next morning, when nurse, according to promise, came to wake them at an earlier hour than usual; for nurse and Patrick had been taken into the secret, and the latter had promised not to ring the rising-bell for this morning, but to let the children wake their parents in their own way. Harry had procured half a dozen bells of different tones, and had taught his brother and sisters to ring them in tune, producing what they called "Christmas Chimes." I cannot say that they sounded much like chimes, or that the tune was very easily distinguished; but since the children were satisfied

with their own performance it answered all the purpose. And certainly had not papa and mamma been already awake, they could not have slept one moment after all this din was raised at their door. Mr Bradford, however, was up and nearly dressed, for Miss Baby had chosen to wake at an early hour, and looking around for something with which to amuse herself, had discovered two new playthings in her father's nose and hair. These she chose to consider her own proper Christmas gifts, and had ever since been making good use of them. Papa tired of the fun sooner than she did, and had been forced to take the new toys beyond the reach of the little hands. Both he and mamma laughed heartily at their Christmas greeting; but soon came sweeter sounds, for when the chimes were over, the four clear young voices rose in the beautiful hymn:—

> "Hark, the herald angels sing
> Glory to the new-born king."

No music ever sounded more delightful in the ears of Mr and Mrs Bradford, and when the hymn was finished, papa waited to be sure that no more was to follow. But now came shouts of "Merry Christmas!" and as he opened the door, the

whole happy, laughing flock rushed in, with Flossy barking joyously at their heels.

"Now for the stockings!" said Fred, when all loving wishes had been exchanged. "One at a time. You begin, Hal."

There hung the stockings all in a row as they had been left last night; but now they were full instead of empty, and to the top of each was pinned a piece of paper with some words written in a large, sprawling hand.

Now Harry, though he was by no means a miserly boy, had a fancy for saving all sorts of stray odds and ends, saying that they might be of use some day. This habit of his gave a great deal of amusement to Fred, and now he seemed much delighted when on Harry's paper were found the words, "For Master Saveall." At the top of the stocking was a packet of sugar-plums, below an old battered tin cup, some broken pieces of china, part of a knife-blade, and some scraps of paper. Harry rolled the paper into a ball and threw it at Fred's head.

"Now for number two," said the mischievous fellow, unpinning the paper from his stocking, which did not look as full as Harry's. "'The pattern boy of the house'—that's myself, of

course,—'needs nothing but the reward of his own conscience, and the goodies whose sweetness is only equalled by his disposition.' Good for Santa Claus! He 's a gentleman of sense."

"There 's something else there," said Maggie.

Fred looked rather surprised, but plunging his hand down to the bottom of his stocking, pulled out a small square box. Opening it, he found two little parcels, one containing mustard, the other pepper, with the labels, "Like to like." He coloured furiously, but laughed good-naturedly, saying, "All fair; give and take."

On Maggie's paper was written, "For the girl who would not peep." And besides sugar-plums, the stocking held a tiny log-cabin, a puzzle of Harry's which she had long wished to have, and two or three other small toys. Bessie's and Franky's held pretty much the same, except that in Bessie's, instead of the log-cabin, was a tiny doll dressed as a policeman; for since her adventure she had been very fond of talking of her friends, the policemen, and her stocking was ticketed, "For the girl who will not believe that Santa Claus really is."

But now nurse coming in after her baby, looked first at her little sock, and to her great disgust,

found nothing but a bundle of twigs tied on the outside.

"The old rascal!" she said; "does he mean to say my baby wants a whipping? The best baby that ever lived! I'll just lay this rod over his own shoulders."

"You'll have to catch him first," said Fred, "and you won't have a chance till next Christmas-eve."

"Won't I though?" said nurse, and she made a grasp at the laughing boy, who dived, and the next instant was off with nurse after him. But nurse was old and fat, Fred, young and active, and he vaulted over balusters, and took flying leaps down-stairs in a way which quite terrified her; so that she begged him to "stop and not risk his neck on this blessed Christmas morn."

"As well risk my neck as my shoulders," said Fred. "Will you promise not to visit the sins of Santa Claus on me if I consent not to kill myself?"

Nurse promised, and went back for her baby, whom she carried off to the nursery, covering it with kisses, and talking to it as though she thought it very badly treated.

"It's rather droll, is it not, that Santa Claus'

handwriting should be so much like that of our Fred?" said Mr Bradford.

"Not at all, sir, for he took lessons of me when he was young," answered the rogue, with a comical look at his father.

"Papa," said Harry, at the breakfast-table, "can you tell us now about Santa Claus?"

"I will tell you all I know, but that is not much," said his father. "Santa Claus is Dutch or German for St Nicholas. Many hundred years ago, there lived far away in the East a good old bishop, named Nicholas, who gave up his life to acts of charity and mercy. He was said to have a great love for children, and many stories are told of his kindness to them; hence, he came to be regarded as their special friend. After his death the Romish Church, to which he belonged, made him a saint; and as his feast day, or the day which particularly belonged to him, happened to be near Christmas, he was supposed to take a great share in the rejoicings of that day."

"But why is he said to come down the chimney and fill stockings?" asked Fred.

"I do not know," said Mr Bradford, "and though I have questioned several people who

know a great deal about old customs, I have never been able to find out how this idea arose. In some parts of Europe he is supposed to be a child angel, not an old man; and in France the children call him Noel, and put their shoes on the hearth to be filled. Perhaps the custom of giving presents at this time arose from the gifts which the wise men of the East brought to the infant Saviour; perhaps it was only intended to remind us of the greatest and most precious of all gifts which *we* received on this day. My Bessie can tell what that was; can she not?"

"God's Jesus, who came to save us, so His Father could take us to heaven," said the little girl.

"Right, my darling; and can Maggie tell what was the song the angels sang on this happy morning?"

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," said Maggie.

"And every Christmas-day since the song has been repeated by men and angels. Is it not a pleasant thought that all over the world, in every land where Christ is known, millions of happy voices ring forth the glad tidings, 'For unto us is born this day a Saviour, who is Christ the

Lord;' that millions of young children are singing praises to Him who became a little child that He might bring to us the one priceless gift without which all others are worthless? For from this flows every good thing; without the peace, comfort, and safety which this has brought, there would be nothing but misery and unhappiness, even for those who do not love and bless the holy child Jesus, or trust to His salvation. Every prayer which we offer, not only on this day but on all days of the year, finds its way to the Father's ear only through His name; every joy is made brighter, every sorrow lighter, by the thought of the one great blessing the birthday of our Saviour brought."

And now there were down-stairs several poor people to be attended to before church time; for on this day, of all others, Mr and Mrs Bradford would not forget those who had not as many good gifts as themselves. There was Mary Bent, who had risen long before daylight that she might be in the city at an early hour. Very cold and tired she looked, but she cheerfully answered the children's "Merry Christmas;" and when she had eaten the good breakfast Mrs Bradford ordered for her, the colour came into

her pale cheeks, and she quite agreed with Maggie and Bessie that this was the happiest day in all the year.

"Mrs Duncan ordered our Christmas dinner sent from Riverside, ma'am," she said, courtesying to Mrs Bradford; "and old Mr Duncan sent a puzzle to Jemmy; so there's nothing more to be wished for."

"Still," said the lady, "I suppose you will not refuse the present which the children have for you."

No fear of that, as the sparkle of Mary's eyes showed when Maggie and Bessie came with the warm cloak which they had bought for her. It was tried on at once, and found to fit pretty well, leaving, it is true, some room for Mary to grow, but that was a fault on the right side. Mrs Bradford gave her a hood for herself, and a book for Jemmy, with a parcel of cakes and candies, and some tea and sugar for her mother, and the little radish-girl went home with a light, happy heart.

There was an old negro man nearly a hundred years of age, but who still managed to hobble about with a stick and pay a Christmas visit to his kind friends, and who, when Mrs Bradford gave him money and a hat, said, "Dear honey,

I didn't spect nothin'; I jest came for a sight of your pooty face." But, nevertheless, old Jack would have been sadly disappointed to go away empty-handed; indeed, I think it quite doubtful if he would have gone away at all until he had received something.

There were several others to be made happy, but it would take too long to tell who they all were. Every one, however, went from Mr Bradford's door blessing the kind hearts who could not be content unless they shared with others the many good gifts God had bestowed upon them. Then to church to praise the Lord for all the mercies of the day; after which, Maggie and Bessie were taken to a large room, where the children of the Church Mission School were to have a Christmas dinner. Roast beef and turkey, with other good things, had been furnished for the little ones, many of whom, perhaps, never had a comfortable meal save on this day of the year.

Mrs Bradford brought her children away before the dinner was quite over, for she feared Bessie would be too tired, and when they reached home, told her she must take a little rest. Bessie thought it a pity to lose a moment of Christmas-day in sleep; but, like the obedient child she

was, lay down on mamma's sofa. But after lying quite still for about ten minutes with her eyes closed, she said, "Mamma, I have kept my eyes tight shut for a great many hours, and the sleep will not come."

Her mother laughed, and said she might get up, since the time seemed so long, and sent her to the nursery to be dressed for dinner.

And now came grandmamma and Aunt Annie, Grandpapa Duncan, Aunt Helen, and Uncle John with Baby Nellie, and afterwards Colonel and Mrs Rush. What a long dinner-table that was, and what a circle of bright, happy faces about it! Maggie and Bessie, and perhaps Fred and Harry, too, had thought it rather foolish to think of dinner when there was the Christmas-tree waiting in the library; but, somehow, they all contrived to enjoy the merry meal very much. Fred declared he wished his father kept a hotel, it was so jolly to sit down to dinner with such a lot of people.

Soon came Tom, Lily, and Eddy Norris, with Gracie Howard, to share in the grand event of the day. Papa and Uncle John disappeared for a few moments, then the servants were called, the library door thrown open, and there stood the

Christmas-tree in all its splendour. On the topmost bough was a figure of old Santa Claus, with his pack upon his back; around him burned a row of wax tapers, and on every little twig hung flags, spangles, bright-coloured balls, and bonbons; while the larger and stouter branches and the green tub were covered with the heavier gifts. Such shouts of delight as came from the little ones! Baby, in mamma's arms, seemed to think the whole show was for her amusement, and crowed and laughed and stretched out her dimpled hands towards the pretty things, which she would soon have destroyed, had she been allowed to grasp them.

When the tree had been sufficiently admired, Mr Bradford stepped forward, and, taking down one after another of the gifts, handed them to the persons for whom they were intended. One of the first things was a sweet picture in a black walnut frame, which he gave to mamma. Great was her delight when she saw the faces of her two little daughters, so prettily painted by her sister.

"Now may we see, Aunt Helen?" said Maggie, and receiving permission, she and Bessie ran eagerly forward. "Oh, how sweet Bessie and

Flossy look! And there's another pretty little girl standing by. Why, that's me!"

Every one laughed; but Maggie was so pleased she did not think about that, but thanked Aunt Helen for putting her in the picture. Bessie was even more surprised, and could not understand how her aunt could paint a picture without her knowing it.

Now papa called Maggie, for there was a beautiful little bed for her doll; and next came one for Bessie. Never was there a tree that bore such various and delightful fruit,—fruit suited to large and small, from Grandpapa Duncan down to the dear baby; and never were richer or happier children than our Maggie and Bessie. There seemed to be presents from every one to every one, and happy voices and merry laughter filled the room. The Colonel and Mrs Rush were very much pleased with the book-marks, "I love you, sir," and "Remember me, ma'am;" that is, if smiles and kisses were to be taken as signs, and promised to keep them as long as they lived.

Nor were papa and mamma less delighted with the paper-weight and picture, and the markers worked with "To my dear father," and "To my

dear mother." Mamma did not in the least care that Maggie, trying to do hers by herself, had put the o and the m quite close together, making it read "Tomy dear mother," a mistake which mischievous Aunt Annie, enjoying the joke, had not corrected. Of all the gifts which Mr and Mrs Bradford received that evening, none pleased them more than those which the fingers of their own little daughters had manufactured.

As for nurse, she scarcely had eyes or thoughts for her own presents, so occupied was she with the treasures which showed that the youngest darling of the flock had not been forgotten.

"Well, mammy," said Fred, shaking in the old woman's ears the silver and coral rattle which had been grandmamma's gift to baby, "will you forgive the trick which Santa Claus served you last night?"

"I will," answered nurse, "and I wish he may never turn out a worse fellow than the rogue who played his part."

The excitement and gaiety was calming down a little, when Harry suddenly said, "See there, papa. There must be a fire," and he pointed towards the window.

Mr Bradford hastily drew back the curtain,

and as a crimson glare was seen upon the snow, it did indeed seem for a moment as if Harry's words were true.

But directly Mr Bradford said, "It is no fire, but a splendid aurora, let us go up-strairs, where we may have a better view;" and taking Bessie in his arms, he carried her to an upper room, whither they were followed by all the rest. It was indeed a magnificent sight which met their eyes. Far down in the northern sky appeared a dark purple arch; above it a second of the brightest gold, while from the latter shot long rays or streamers of every brilliant colour, changing each instant, and overhead glowed the steadier crimson light, which, throwing its reflection on the pure white snow, had caused Harry to think it was a large fire.

For a moment Maggie and Bessie stood speechless with delight, for they had never seen anything like this before. Then Bessie exclaimed, joyously, "Papa, papa, have the angels opened the gates of heaven to let the glory shine out 'cause it's Christmas night?"

No one smiled at the pretty idea, though all were pleased; for sweet as was the thought, it yet was solemn; and as they watched the flash-

ing play of those beautiful northern lights, it did indeed seem almost as if there were reason in the little darling's words, and as if the hosts of heaven in their rejoicing over man's salvation might be giving them some glimpse of the glory purchased for them on this blessed night.

But Mr Bradford whispered softly as he drew her closer to him, "No, my darling. Our eyes may never behold the beauty of heaven till our Father takes us to Himself. This is the work of His hand, and lovely it is; but it is as nothing to the glory of the great white throne whereon He sits."

And so ended this happy Christmas, which our Maggie and Bessie will both remember as long as they shall live.

XVIII.

THE PURCHASE OF THE LIBRARY.

On the Sunday morning following Christmas, Mrs Rush asked her little scholars if they all had their money ready for the library. Each one answered "Yes," and she told them she would allow them to choose what books they would send; and that on the next day she would take them all down town to a large shop, where they would find a great number of pretty and suitable children's books. Accordingly, on Monday morning, she drove up to Mr Bradford's door at the appointed hour. Maggie and Bessie, ready for the ride, were watching for her, and did not keep her a moment waiting. Then they stopped at Mr Howard's door to take up Gracie, and next at Mr Norris' for Lily. Each little girl, as she entered the carriage, would offer Mrs Rush her share of the money; but she told them they had better keep it until they had bought

the books, and then pay for them with their own hands.

"Please don't say 'the books,'" said Maggie.

"And why not?" asked Mrs Rush. "Are you not going to buy books?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Maggie; "but then it is a great deal more satisfaction to say 'library.'"

"Oh! that is it," said Mrs Rush, laughing. "Well, hereafter, I shall be careful to say your 'library.'"

"Not ours; the log-cabin children's library," said Gracie.

"Very well," said Mrs Rush. "You will have me all right by and by. I see I must be on my guard with such very particular young ladies."

"Don't you like to be coryected, Mrs Yush?" asked Bessie.

"Certainly; when I am wrong, I always wish to be put right; and I shall speak of your log-cabin library in any way you please; for you have surely earned the right to say how it shall be."

"Tom says Maggie and Bessie deserve more credit than Gracie and I," said Lily, "because they really earned the money, and Gracie and I had it without taking any trouble about it."

"But you have denied yourselves in order to give it," said Mrs Rush, "and I think you ought not to be without your share of credit."

"What does credit mean?" asked Bessie.

"Oh!" said Maggie, before any one else could speak, "it means to think yourself very great, and to have a fuss made about you. I am sure we did not do it for that; did we, Bessie?"

"I know Tom did not mean that," said Lily. "He thinks you're very nice."

"And I think Maggie makes a mistake, and does not quite understand the meaning of the word 'credit,'" said Mrs Rush. "To give a person credit for any action, dear Maggie, is only to give him the praise that is due to him. There is no need to think that people are making a fuss about you because they do this."

"I can't help it, Mrs Rush," said Maggie. "I always do feel great when people praise me, and nurse says it is not good for me."

"What do you mean by feeling great?" asked Mrs Rush. "Do you mean you feel vain and self-glorious?"

"No," said Maggie, "not quite that, but I feel pleased, and as if I liked it; and I know sometimes I do things because I hope people

will praise me; but I am quite sure I did not do this for that, but because I felt sorry for those log-cabin children, and wanted to help them."

"I have not a doubt of it, my dear little girl," said Mrs Rush, "and I do not think you could have been so earnest and persevering if you had not had a better motive than the desire for praise. I believe you have all done it from a sincere wish to help others who are not as well off as yourselves; and it is not wrong to like praise, Maggie, if we do not allow it to make us vain, or to cause us to cease from well-doing. We all enjoy it, old and young, and if it is sincere, and we feel that we deserve it, it is quite right to be pleased with the approval of our friends."

"But Maggie is a great deal nicer than she thinks herself," said Bessie. "I don't think anybody knows how very nice she is, 'cept me."

Mrs Rush smiled at the affectionate little sister, who never missed a chance of saying a kind or loving word for Maggie.

So they chatted away until they reached the bookshop, where Mrs Rush went in with the whole of her small flock. This was a very large shop, and from the floor to the ceiling the walls

were covered with shelves, on which lay piles on piles of books. The gentleman whom Mrs Rush wished to see was engaged, and she sat down to wait until he should be at liberty to attend to her; while the children gathered about her, noticing all around them, and prattling away as fast as their tongues could go.

"Did you ever see such lots and lots of books," said Gracie.

"I suppose the gentleman to whom this shop belongs must be about a million years old," said Lily.

"Why, he couldn't be," said Maggie; "only the people that lived in the Bible were so very old. I wish I had lived then, it's such fun to be alive."

"If you had lived then, you would not be alive now," said Mrs Rush, with a smile, "and no one ever lived to be a million years old. The world has not been created so long, and the oldest man, Methuselah, was only nine hundred and sixty-nine when he died. But what made you think Mr Brown must have lived a million years, Lily?"

"Because he has written such lots of books," said Lily; "just see how many!"

"But you do not think Mr Brown has himself written all these books?"

"Why, yes, ma'am," said Lily.

"It would indeed take a long lifetime to write so many," said Mrs Rush, "but I do not believe Mr Brown has written more than half a dozen."

"Who did it then?" asked Lily.

"A great many different persons. People write books and bring them to Mr Brown, and he publishes them; that is, he has them printed and bound, and then sells them."

"I am glad it took a great many people to do it," said Maggie, "because if they take the trouble to write books for children, I suppose it's because they like us, and it is nice to have a great many people to love you."

"I wonder why 'most everybody loves children," said Gracie.

"If you thought about Christmas, you 'd know that," said Bessie. "It 's 'cause Jesus was once a little child; and besides, when He was a man, He loved children His own self."

Just then the gentleman for whom Mrs Rush was waiting came forward, and said he was now at leisure to attend to her. She told him for what she had come, and that she wished these

little girls, who were going to pay for the library, to choose their favourite books.

He shook hands with them all, and then, taking paper and pencil, told them to tell him in turn what they would have.

Bessie, being the youngest, had the first choice, and she named the books she liked best. The others did the same, but when the list was made out, Mr Brown said ten dollars would purchase several more, and bringing some volumes which had just been published, said he could recommend those for their purpose. The children were quite ready to take them upon his word, and when the whole ten dollars' worth was laid out, looked at the pile with great satisfaction. Mr Brown offered to send the books wherever they might choose, but that would not answer at all. The library must be taken with them in the carriage, and carried home by Mrs Rush, with whom it was to remain until those of the children's friends who wished to see it had had the opportunity, when it was to be sent to Miss Winslow, with a note from the four little girls to the western children. Maggie was asked by the others to "make up" the note, and as Mrs Rush took them all home to spend the rest of the day

with her and the colonel, it was done before they separated that evening. This was the note which Colonel Rush wrote out and put up with the books:—

"Dear log-cabin children, whose names we don't know, but we like you all the same, please to take this library. Four of us send it to you, —Maggie, and Bessie, and Gracie, and Lily; and I am Maggie, and the others are the rest. Our dear teacher, Miss Winslow, who used to have us all except Bessie, who was too little, in her Sunday-school class, is going to teach you in your log-cabin, and Santa Claus put a log-cabin in my stocking, but I knew it was Fred; and she says you have very few books, and we would like you to have some more; so we have bought this library for you, and we hope you will read all the books and like them. Papa and Colonel Rush are going to send you some picture cards, with hymns and verses like those in our Sunday-school, and Miss Winslow is going to take you some Bibles, so you see if you want to learn about Jesus you can, and, if you are good children, you will. Miss Winslow is very good, and you will love her very much, and we are

very sorry she is going away; but now we have Sunday-school in Mrs Rush's room, and she is so sweet you can't think, and the colonel does tell us such stories; so we can spare Miss Winslow, and you must be very good to Miss Winslow, because she left her comfortable home to be a missionary to you, and Mr Long too, so you ought to mind all they say, and if you do not, you ought to be served right, and never have any of the library books to read. But we think you will be good, and some day Miss Winslow is going to write to us about you, and if you are naughty you would be ashamed to have it put in a letter. Dear log-cabin children, we all send you our love, and we hope you had a Christmas-tree, and here are our names:

"MAGGIE BRADFORD.
"GRACIE HOWARD.
"LILY NORRIS.
"BESSIE BRADFORD."

The colonel wrote it all down just as Maggie dictated it to him, but when Miss Winslow read the letter to the western children, she did not think it necessary to read the whole of the last part, but left out a few words here and there.

As Maggie did not know this, it did not make any difference to her.

The books were covered and put up in a neat box which Mr Bradford provided, and then given into Miss Winslow's care. She was very much pleased, and told the little girls she should not fail to tell the western children all about their kind young friends in the east.

Some weeks after she went away, there came a letter from her, directed, "To my dear little scholars." It had come in another to Mrs Rush, and arrived on Saturday night; so when they came to her room on Sunday morning, they found this pleasure awaiting them. Mrs Rush read it aloud to them.

"My dear Little Girls,—

"After a long and tedious journey, we arrived at this place. We lost several articles of our baggage by the way; but I am glad to tell you that your precious library was not among them. That came quite safely, and it would do good to your generous young hearts to see what delight these poor children take in the books; and not only the children, but the grown people also, are very anxious to have them.

"We are not living in a large city or village, but in a small settlement of a dozen or so of houses, and very different the houses are from those you are accustomed to. They are all log-cabins—our own as well as the rest—but we manage to make ourselves pretty comfortable, and quite contented. Then we have so much to do, that there is no time to think of little annoyances.

"On Sunday the people come from other settlements, miles and miles away, to hear Mr Long preach; and when our simple services are over, the children beg for the books you have sent for their use. Some of them are well-thumbed already; but, on the whole, they take good care of them, partly for their own sakes, partly for that of their kind little friends so far away.

"On week-days, Mr Long rides from place to place to teach and talk to the people. When I can borrow a pony or mule, I go with him, and the cry is always for 'books, books.' I take two or three from the library with me, and leave them here and there. They pass from house to house, till all who wish have read them; then they are returned to me, and others asked for.

"There is an old coloured woman who lives

in one of the houses near us; she has not left her bed for years; she is lame and helpless. I went to see her when I first came here; but she took little notice of me until I offered to read to her. Then she turned her face to me, and asked if I had books. I told her yes, and, seeing she was ready to listen, I opened my Bible and read several chapters to her. To my surprise, she seemed to be quite familiar with God's Word, and asked for certain chapters, not by name or number, but by repeating some verse they contained, or by telling me the subject. Since then I have been to see her every day; and thinking she might like to hear some of the pretty stories in your library, I took one with me the other morning. She seemed well pleased with the idea, and before I began, I told her how I had procured the books. She was much interested, and at last asked the names of the children who had been so thoughtful. When I mentioned Maggie and Bessie Bradford, her whole face lighted up, and she asked me whose children they were. I told her, and she at once said she had known Maggie's and Bessie's papa when she was at home, 'to dear ole New York;' and told me that her brother Jack, if he were still alive,

often went to see Mr Bradford's family, who were very kind to him. So when Maggie and Bessie see old Jack, they can tell him this news of his sister. Poor old Dinah never tires of asking about you, or of talking of the family, and when I go away, always begs me to leave one of the library-books with her. She cannot read a word; but she says she likes to look at the pictures, and to hold the book in her hands, because it does her good just to feel it and think it came from 'dear Massa Henry's chillen.'

"So, my little darlings all, you see what joy your present has brought to these poor people. That God may bless you for your readiness to help in His work, and reward you abundantly, is the prayer of

"Your loving

"MARY LONG."

THE END.

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